Inter-textual nation: Novel imaginings of Palestinian community in the works of Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh

Nora E. H. Parr

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Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Near and Middle East

SOAS, University of London

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Abstract

The novel, it is said, represents a "precise analogue" of the imagined national community (Anderson). This national community is imagined as "inherently limited and sovereign." The Palestinian novel, however, tells the story of a national community that is neither limited nor sovereign. This study examines the literary mechanisms employed by Palestinian novelists to imagine a national community within and beyond the nation-state. It argues that the totality of a dispersed, discontiguous, and multi-sited Palestinian community with experiences that surpass dominant structures of history and geography is at the heart of the innovative impulse in the Palestinian novel. It focuses on nine novels by Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh (b.1954, Wiḥdāt camp, Amman) from two series: *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya* (The Palestine Comedies), and the *Shurafāt* (Balconies). This body of work develops a model of Palestinian national belonging coined here as inter-textual. Drawn from Genette, Kristeva, Bloom, Barthes, and Bakhtin, the term describes the relationships between different Palestinian communities. The inter-textual nation, as an alternative paradigm of the national, creates an imaginary within which divergent narratives of Palestinian experience can be understood as a complex and networked whole. The inter-textual nation creates imaginative links that break down not only the structures of thought which made thinking the nation-state possible, but further identifies, interrogates, and disrupts the structures of power that reinforced or existed alongside the nation state, including gender, family, and tradition. Subsumed within the story of an inter-textual Palestinian nation, these structures can no longer dictate or curtail what it means to be national. Imagined along the lines of Walter Benjamin's constellation of the idea, the inter-textual nation becomes an open-ended and flexible construct that not only envisions a distinctive model for national belonging, but also prompts an alternative conceptual frame within which to read a new aesthetics of Arabic Literature more broadly.

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Notes on transliteration, citation, translation

This thesis makes use of the IJMES system of transliteration when rendering words from Arabic into English. Common names of political figures and authors—particularly those available in translation—are given according to Standard English usage.

Since many novels are treated at length, the Chicago system of citation has been employed, which allows for a combination of in-text and endnote referencing. Where page numbers are given, the title of the text referenced will appear above, and all page numbers referenced will refer to that text.

All of the translations from the Arabic are my own, except in the case of excerpts from Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh's *Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍāʾ* (2007), where Nancy Roberts' translation, *Time of White Horses* (University of Cairo Press, 2012) is used. All page references for *Zaman* are to the translated text unless otherwise indicated. To date, none of the other novels treated in this thesis are available in translation.

For works referenced in the concluding section of this work, text titles and author names are rendered in the most common Standard English translation. Since the aim of the section is to widen discourse on theory being presented, this is done so easy access can be had to the works as they are available in English.

As is the convention, ellipses are used to indicate when quotations are abridged. However, to distinguish this from the extensive use of ellipses in the novels under consideration, ellipses indicating an abridged quotation are placed between square brackets thus: […]. All round-bracketed information that appears within quotations comes from the texts themselves.

List of tables and illustrations

Prologue

The question that drives this project may be boiled down thus: why is it so difficult to talk about Palestine in a way that adequately reflects just what 'Palestine' means today? This question emerges from a dissatisfaction around even the most well meaning of commentators, critics, and analysists, who seem to become tied up in words when trying to relate the realities of Palestinian life and politics. Somehow, what Palestine is, is thwarted by the frame of the nation-state, pre-set definitions or arguments about what it means to be a 'people,' embedded notions about what it means to exist within or have sovereignty over space, and the strict path of a national history. When it is so plainly obvious what Palestine is when it's encountered face-to-face, I have often wondered why it seems impossible to capture this in words—to say nothing of 'solutions.' This project became one of describing a Palestinian nation as it already exists, and interrogating the frameworks that make its articulation so challenging. In particular, I wanted to understand the ways that an *entire* Palestinian community exists and existed, and to look closely at the mechanisms used to imagine links between what language and existing concepts of state, sovereignty, and history seem to tear apart. As a student of literature, the novel was obvious place to turn.

To describe how a Palestinian nation is being imagined within literature, a whole contingent of questions is raised. What I have discovered, is that to critically discuss Palestine today is to engage in a debate over some of the most prescient questions of our age. In thinking about the representation of Palestinian politics, geographies, and community, one must grapple with questions of identity, of the nation, of belonging, and of nationalism. To do this meant to question the very roots of the current internationalist system, from its human rights bodies to its visa systems to its UN institutions. Any investigation into contemporary Palestinian-ness seems also to bring into focus issues of colonialism and post-colonialism, 'development' and neo-colonialism, as well as the power dynamics embedded within these structures. Attendant to these are issues of gender, family, 'tradition,' and religion, which come to play a role in defining Palestine and the Palestinian experience. These questions, it becomes clear, are intimately related to the question of the nation, and to concepts of personhood and belonging. Thinking these in relation to Palestine, the role of women in the nation, in resistance, and the construction of masculinity are unavoidable; they confront you everywhere from checkpoint graffiti to pop-up galleries

in global capitals. So too for discourses on the modern and the traditional, which always seem to shadow claims to the past and hopes for the future.

All of these issues—what is a man, who is a Palestinian, where is the past, and what to include in the future—intersect in the question of the nation. It is the first and the last point of debate, with everything else falling in between. Where is it? When is it? Who belongs to it? To whom does it belong? Though the answers to these questions must ultimately rest with the Palestinian people themselves, there seems work to be done to understand in the interim where the nation *is* being located. Where debates circle past and future, little attention seems to be paid to the realities of the Palestinian nation today, and how it is being imagined by a disparate and dispersed group of Palestinian individuals and communities. At the very least, understanding what the nation is imagined as today might provide a better frame of analysis for those seeking to understand, or even work on behalf of a Palestinian nation, to ensure a safe and prosperous future. At best, it might help push the very discourse on nations and nationalisms, which remain dominated by a 19th century vision of what the nation includes. In working to trace a contemporary imagination of Palestinian national community, an alternative to the dominant paradigm of belonging is sought. This alternative, given here as a model for the nation, may resonate with groups far beyond the Palestinian community; indeed, in working through this project, I have found many of the mechanisms that link Palestine together to fit precisely with my own experience as a dual-passport, multi-locational first-generation Canadian living in the age of globalization.

The following sections and chapters make up my own attempt to understand and locate existing ways of articulating Palestinian nationhood, belonging, and community. These are used to challenge and explore the prevailing structures that have hitherto limited expression, imagination, and discussion of Palestine. The result, I hope, might prove a useful re-evaluation of the paradigm of the nation—its location, its past, its future. It aims to outline the mechanisms by which the nation has been re-imagined, and how it exists today in what will be ultimately described as a 'nation constellation,' whose points are revealed, held together, and identified through a process that the following pages will define as inter-textual.

Introduction

This study of the nation and the problems of narrating its Palestinian realities will be carried out through the analysis of a subset of works by one Palestinian author, Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh. It explores, through an examination of intertextuality, how Naṣrallāh's texts prompt a wider conception of the term. It shows how we might move from current thinking on intertextuality to the development of a more complex term, inter-textuality, which encompasses a wider understanding of texts and puts their relationships to work as a framework of thought. It suggests that this framework creates a model for the imagining of a Palestinian national community as it exists today.

These broad claims are precariously—and therefore tentatively—based on a small sample of work. While efforts have been made throughout the text to draw parallels with other works and other authors as appropriate, some necessary introductions and caveats seem necessary before setting off. So, in order of least known to most commonly understood, this short section will begin by introducing Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, his literary career, and the place of the works under consideration here within it. It will next turn to the question of intertextuality, centrally to explain that the writing under investigation does not offer any particular 'novel' innovations as a technique. A brief look at the field of intertextuality in Arabic literature will, however, serve to introduce the scope of the idea, and make all the more fascinating what an investigation of Naṣrallāh's work is able to achieve.

Finally, this introduction will turn to the question of the nation, and the admittedly limited framework it adopts for understanding what the works are writing against, compared to what they are imagining as possible. Just why these three elements are put into action the way that they are will become clear, however, with a brief overview of how *Inter-textual nation* goes about making its argument, its basic conceptual building blocks, and the theoretical elements it borrows as well as contributes to re-thinking. This overview, offered here, will also lay out the kinds of breakthroughs that the analysis allows, and will preface the study with a clear idea of its possible implications. Without further ado, then, let us begin with author whose works provide the backbone of this project.

Naṣrallāh

Born in the Wiḥdāt refugee camp in 1954 when the camp was still well outside of the Jordanian capital Amman, Naṣrallāh has become a prolific writer who packs audience halls

across the Middle East for almost yearly book launches. His works have twice been long-listed for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, and there is a project currently underway to bring a substantial number of his novels into English (only three of some fifteen works of prose fiction have thus far been translated).[1] Though he continues to reside in Wiḥdāt, Naṣrallāh lived for a short period in the Gulf after graduation, working as a teacher. On return to Jordan he continued work teaching as well as in journalism and news editing. It was on this return that he published his first novel in the early 80s. Later on in his career Naṣrallāh was appointed director of the largest non-governmental cultural institution in Jordan, Darat al-Funun, and since his retirement in the early 2010s he has devoted himself entirely to writing, and to publicizing his works, including frequent attendance at local book clubs and community events as well as international festivals.

Today, his renown is such that Naṣrallāh could be labelled the most popular Palestinian author since the death in 2008 of the 'national poet' Maḥmūd Darwīsh. Though, in terms of awards and international he is rivalled by recent IPAF winner Raba'ī al-Madhūn or the much talked-about 'Adanīyah Shiblī, who was awarded the A.M. Qattan Foundation Young Writer of the Year award two years running, and whose work is rapidly translated as soon as it hits the shelves.[2] What might be more accurate, however, would be to say that Naṣrallāh is one prominent member of an increasingly well-established contingent of Palestinian writers gaining recognition locally, regionally, and internationally. He is part of a literary field that has moved away from the lionization of a tiny core of writers, to one that is broadly rich and consistently complex. His works are at once unique within and representative of the current state of Palestinian literature, and analysis of them should be taken as both.

Though focused almost exclusively on Naṣrallāh's writings, *Inter-textual nation* does not take as its central interest the life and literary development of the author as a literary figure. It does not even consider all of Naṣrallāh's 36 published works, and looks only at a selection of nine of his novels, which come from two series, *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya* [The Palestine Comedies] (which today consists of eight novels), and the *Shurafāt* [Balconies] (which today includes five novels). The works being examined here were published into these series between 1991 and 2010. They were not, however, the only works Naṣrallāh published over the same period; his literary output in these productive years included ten

collections of poetry, an autobiography, a work of cinematic criticism, and two academic volumes he published as editor. Naṣrallāh's productive period extends even beyond 2010, with two additional works added to each of the series, bringing their combined number to thirteen, and in the midst of this flurry of publication, Naṣrallāh has remained an active poet, columnist, and painter.

Intertextuality

The question of intertextuality and its uses within Naṣrallāh's writing form a central concern of the chapters to follow. However, this study makes no claim that Naṣrallāh's use of the devices is unique to either Palestinian writing specifically, or Arabic writing more generally. The opposite might in fact be said. In the long history of Arabic letters, different modes of intertextuality[3] have been developed and employed for centuries. In the pre-Islamic period intertextuality was seen as a technique for authors to "exhibit the extent of their awareness of the tradition,"[4] and as a way to invoke Arabic literary heritage. Quoting one early poet, Sabry Hafez shows even an early critical awareness of the effects of intertextuality on a text, where indeed, in a poem "The meaning of the first speech remains in its second pronunciation."[5] Play with genre and the nature of the text, moreover, is a tradition that began even before the first novel was ever published in Arabic.[6] In the modern period intertextuality in Arabic writing has become almost ubiquitous with the age. Ahmad Faris Shidyaq's *al-Sāq ʿalā al-sāq* is set as one of the earlier 'modern' examples of intertextuality, and uses the device to set "about examining the many ways the self cannot be accommodated by social frameworks."[7] So, Naṣrallāh's exploration of the novel form and experimentation so that it might accommodate Palestinian social frameworks is hardly innovative, even while it is complex and endlessly fascinating.

Plenty of theorists have looked at the phenomenon of intertextuality in Arabic literature, so this investigation provides little new in this regard. It has been written abou as a prominent part of Arabic novel writing since the late 60s,[8] it is found to forge links between modern texts and "texts of their cultural past,"[9] it is a way of negotiating a perceived split between 'tradition' and 'modernity.' Contemporary critics tend to take this even further, and see intertextuality in Arabic fiction as part of the "dialectic between modernity and history."[10] This has particularly been the case for the modern Arabic novel, a genre charged with imaginatively working out the constructed and contested binaries of "nationalist

discourse." [11] This includes but is not limited to concepts of "city/village, individual/community, alienation/authenticity, [to] tradition/modernity."[12] This project will not look at how intertextuality breaks these binaries, but rather at how these binaries tend to conform to still-dominant colonial and post-colonial frameworks.

Nor is the device of the series, which becomes seminal in the analysis of Naṣrallāh's works, unique to Naṣrallāh. Naguib Mahfouz penned perhaps the most famous series of novels between 1956-7, today referred to as the Cairo Trilogy, are known collectively as Egypt's national epic due to their "vast historical scope," and complicated national political allegory based on the lives of members of an old family from Cairo's old district.[13] Nor is the use of intertextuality to link works in an author's oeuvre a novelty. Elias Khoury—perhaps the best-known author in Arabic to use intertextuality for experimentations in the novel form—in his recent *Sīnalkūl: Riwāyat* incorporated characters from several of his earlier writings; even its title alludes to its multiplicity of texts (*Riwāyat*, novels in the plural).[14] Conjuring themes and identities from across his body of work, Khoury –now in the later stages of a long writing career—is knitting together an intertextual corpus that has done a great deal to thwart the linear. His focus on minority groups in Lebanon, on families that have crossed borders and regions (in particular between Palestine and Lebanon), create histories that certainly call for an alternative and non-linear paradigm for interpretation.

So, this project makes no claim that Naṣrallāh's devices add anything new to the field. What it does suggest, however, is that the way of reading prompted by the texts might be used to read these authors and their collections afresh; that the inter-textual will bring to analysis a tool that will allow readers to see within them imaginations of the nation, of community, or of Arabic literature more broadly that have hitherto been occluded. Reading Mahfouz or Khoury inter-textually, is to look at result of intertextuality as it is investigated here, and to see where it can take us in terms of ways of thinking. For these and other authors we will be able to see who are included in their nations, who are excluded, and what sort of networks meaning is produced within; we can evaluate their work based on wider concepts than those they have hitherto been subject to. For Khoury, memory as an operating and ordering principle would be reduced to only one element of the text,[15] allowing other structures—colonial, gender,[16] religious—to come to the surface. His search for form becomes an intertext; one that must be read alongside the social realities it exists

within. For Mahfouz, it would certainly mean a de-privileging of his mid-career realist works and subjecting these to the central question of time that was apparent in both the early and later novels.[17] The author's seeming obsession with historical time and search for social solutions that surpass it would be 'read in' to the other themes of the novels as a body of work.

However, the imaginative achievements of intertextuality are far too vast to be contained within any one endeavour (indeed, to think to reduce such a technique to a single effort would be to misunderstand the fantastic scope of its possibilities). In order to carry out this project, *Inter-textual nation* focuses on Naṣrallāh's deployment and innovations in intertextuality specifically as it is used to tell the story of Palestinian experience. The scope of works and authors must be necessarily narrow, if it hopes to plumb even the surface of the near-endless types and uses of intertextuality. It is from this narrow investigation that a theory is drawn, to be tested and honed in its encounter with other works.

Nation

This starting frame of the nation is also necessarily narrow. From the 20th century onward (if not at least a century before), both intertextuality and nationalism (in European terms) have been hallmarks of Arabic fiction writing in general,[18] and Palestinian writing specifically.[19] This, of course, is the model of the European and North American nation-state, a frame of imagining that has become "the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time."[20] It is so powerful an imaginary framework that it has become almost a precursor for a 'global' network of actors to be able to imagine what self-determination for various groups and communities across the globe looks like. This is not to say that no other frameworks for imagining the nation exist. These have mostly been advanced through diasporic or post-colonial lenses that focus on dualities, anomalies, exceptions, or responses to the current paradigm. Post-colonial theory, for example, has problematized the formulation of the nation-state as the principal mode of realizing legitimate self-determination,[21] and scholars of diaspora groups have suggested, among other paradigms, a dual "diasporic chronotope,"[22] a condition of "postnationalism,"[23] which has also been explored by scholars of contemporary European nationalism, or "transnationalism."[24]

While these formulations and discussions have certainly advanced the field of nation and nationalism as a topic of study, and many of their insights on the possible shape of community are used here, these alternative formulations remain just that, 'alternative.' None of these suggested structures have yet come to be codified or even recognized within a 'global' set of actors that still determine belonging. So, while they give an opportunity to see the diversity of the nation and what it *can* look like, the struggle remains against the form of the nation state, the imagined national community as Benedict Anderson described it. Perhaps most importantly, it is this dominant form of nationalism and the imagined national community to which the works under consideration here—and indeed much of modern Arabic literature more broadly—is writing within.

In the Arabic tradition, it is not only the centrality of intertextuality that makes Naṣrallāh's writing a clear continuation and development of the field, but also the shared drive of Arab writers from the pre-colonial period to tell a specifically national story.[25] And it is not new to employ intertextuality to help express the realities of that nation. The technique has already been said to enable the telling of "a more complex truth, that of a world blown to pieces by the violence of history."[26] For writers from Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria in particular, intertextuality has been shown to be able to "reproduce the disrupted, shattered socio-political reality"[27] of nations after years of upheaval. This is so much commented on, that Ostle remarks, "to record the fact of the destruction of linear time and the dissolution of mimetic narrative in modernist writing is banal."[28]

Nor is he the first Palestinian writer to recognize the perhaps more urgent necessity of finding a Palestinian narrative (indeed, as Edward Said so poignantly put it: "The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work it, who kept it going, who own it back, and who now plans its future—these issue were reflected, contested, and even for time decided in narrative.").[29] Seminal Palestinian writer Ghassān Kanafānī warned his readers in a 1975 preface for *All that's left to you,* of "This difficulty implicit in making one's way through a world which is jumbled in this fashion." He called this a problem of writing Palestine within established frames, a problem that the author "freely acknowledged," but which he insisted on overcoming, saying, "it is clearly unavoidable if the novel is to tell its story, as I fully

intend that it should, in a single burst."[30] The result, as the story's translator commented in his own preface, is that:

> The five characters in this novel, Hamid, Maryam, Zakaria, Time and the Desert, do not move along parallel or conflicting lines. In this work we find instead a series of disconnected lines which occasionally come together in such a way that they seem to be making just two strands and no more. This process of fusion also involves the elements of time an place, so that there appears to be no clear distinction between places and times which are far removed from each other, or indeed between places and times at a single moment.[31]

This 'fragmentation,' these 'conflicting lines,' and their ability to overcome the "freely acknowledged" problems of narrative are examples of intertextuality (indeed also of inter-textuality, but more on that later), at work creating a constellation of parts that together imagine the nation anew.

Ostle and other critics have urged the field toward a reading of the purpose of the intertextuality, toward a move beyond analysis of what is achieved in telling, in particular when it comes to the ability of intertextuality to challenge and surpass the limitations of artistic form.[32] That is precisely what this project aims to do.

Plan of the work

All this said, Naṣrallāh's works remain a tantalizing body of writing, not only because of the author's use of the device of the series, but because they use this developing intertextuality to forcefully push thinking on the nation. For reasons that will be laid out in Chapter 1, the dominant form of the nation state has made it theoretically impossible to imagine a Palestinian national community. However, imaginings of a Palestinian national story within the form of the national novel have proceeded. Not only has the absence of a nation-state not stopped the successful and prolific writing of Palestinian authors, but the dispossession of the Palestinian people—displaced of land and any sense of a single or linear history— has even been called the impetus for narration.[33] As Nadia Yaqub writes, "The challenge has been not just to imagine a Palestinian community, but to imagine one that can be sustained while the geographic and temporal site to which it refers, pre-1948 Palestine, recedes into history."[34] The task for Palestinian nationalism, then, has always been to re-formulate the practice of narrative in order to successfully tell not just disparate Palestinian experiences, but to craft a narrative that can encapsulate these experiences in all

of their difference and multiplicity. This remains, at its root, a literature of resistance, working within a dominant paradigm not only to "wrest back from the repressive authorities the control over cultural production,"[35] but to re-invent the foundations of that authority so that it fits the lived realities of a non-dominant group. Naṣrallāh's works represent the most sustained and comprehensive exploration of national narrative, and so provide ample material to explore within a relativey stable setting, the complexities that this involves.

Palestine, as Chapter 2 will outline, becomes imagined through the devices and concepts of inter-textuality. An inter-textual imaginary, I will argue, allows each event, location, and era of a nation to be understood as whole and complete, but at the same time shows how it is connected and essential to a larger network of events, locations, and eras that together make the nation. Chapter 2 will also lay out the precise meaning of inter-textuality, as distinct from the more direct intertextuality that involves citation, quotation, transtextuality, metatextuality, influence, parody, etc., and as rather the sum total of all of these mechanisms of interrefferentiality with a particular aim. The alternative term is necessary at once to distinguish usage from –for example—Gerard Genette and Julia Kristeva, who both use the term 'intertextuality' but for different ends. Second, a new term is necessary because 'inter-textuality' does not seek to trace how one text interacts with another –indeed this has for the most part already been achieved by the theorists that this project draws on – but at once the cumulative effect of the accrued usages. More specifically for this project, inter-textuality becomes the broad term through which to understand the relationships between parts of what will come to be called an inter-textual nation, which will ultimately be posited as taking the form of a 'nation constellation.' It is, then, as if to define 'gravity' as that which keeps the stars in an astronomical constellation, but to know that the relationship between each star and its others is governed by a far more complex set of factors that –each layered onto and overlapping with its others –are what keep the stars in the sky and the planets in orbit around them.

The full scope of the term inter-textuality, then, will emerge through its usage throughout this project, and while set out here, I will at the same time endeavour in each chapter to show how the term is operating as a unique one, by simultaneously highlighting the different kinds of 'intertextuality' that are being drawn into the idea. Since there is a very

great deal of repetition of types and modes of the intertextual, however, not every instance will be explored in this sort of detail, so that focus can be given to the wider shape of the constellation that develops, as well as what this means for a Palestinian nation. Since the argument here is not that Naṣrallāh's vision of the nation is unique, I will also endeavour, where possible, to draw attention to other instances in Palestinian Literature where the nation is being imagined in the same fashion. This is at once to show the broader legitimacy of the nation constellation and inter-textuality as frameworks of thought throughout contemporary Palestinian writing, and at the same time to contextualize Naṣrallāh's writing and show how (intertextually) he draws on innovations from a body of national texts.

Given the significance of intertextual play between authors, works, and ideas, as well as the aim of this project to show the network of thinking that Naṣrallāh draws from, it will also be pertinent at points to draw attention to innovations in intertextuality made by other Arab and international writers. While these points will not be drawn together until the final section of this project, the aim is to set out the wider 'galaxy' within which Naṣrallāh and other Palestinian authors are writing, and to eventually trace the constellation within which the Palestinian novel is a part. Following the presentation of the foundational contexts of this project in this introduction, and its companion Chapters 1 and 2 below (which together constitute Part I), the analysis to follow is set out in a further three parts. These broadly follow the logic of first parsing out the techniques and strategies of inter-textuality, and examining what they achieve (Part II), then moving on to explore the sorts of narratives that become possible within this alternative framework (Part III), and finally put findings in the context of the nation constellation, exploring the inter-textual nation as a model (Part IV).

Within these broad strokes, and by way of a guide to specific treatments of each novel considered, Chapter 3 will examine how new inter-textual strategies thwart the idea of national sovereignty, and trace the alternative geography that results from the writing of complex Palestinian experience. It will focus on the first two novels of Naṣrallāh's Palestine project, which launched the rest of the series, and fundamentally changed the basic assumptions of geography and sovereignty when thinking the nation. Chapter 4 will then look at the second key element of inter-textuality: its ability to critique and critically examine structures of power. From narrative to gender to nation, the ability to identify 'architexts' and their assumptions (not only of written texts but also socially constructed

ones) becomes a central component of the inter-textual nation as one that is flexible as well as self-critical. It shows how—with the assumptions of bounded space and linear time dispelled—other components of the nation can be interrogated, and other structures of power taken on.

The chapters of Part III are devoted to the minority, under-represented, and dissenting Palestinian stories that become possible within an inter-textual framework. Broken down into two chapters, the first (Chapter 5) looks at figures of women, children, and refugees, as well as the handicapped or disabled (be it by war, trauma, or birth) as examples of individuals whose experiences are often left out of the national, or become national only through association with dominant frames. By examining what becomes possible to tell within an inter-textual nation, a fuller picture of that new national imaginary emerges. Chapter 6 then turns to dissenting views, and in particular the symbol of the national hero in its many forms. Examining the characters in the Palestine project that challenge or totally reverse the prevailing national trope, just how a symbol can be both false and important within a national imaginary is drawn out. Through this investigation, the many forms of simultaneity and contradiction that are possible through an open and flexible national imaginary become clear. So too do national tropes become open for criticism, recognized as part of but not determinants of what it means to be Palestinian or to be national.

Part IV explores inter-textuality through Walter Benjamin's theory of the idea as a phenomenon of 'compilation' that cannot be subsumed within historical or national trajectories.[36] Using his model of a constellation, which allows for flexibility in understanding the emergence of an idea, some of the most notable elements of the inter-textual nation are drawn out from a literary perspective. Looking closely at inter-textual devices and literary innovations that draw and extend those Genette and others have so far catalogued, Chapter 7 explores how de-territorialized national space can still constitute the location of a nation, and Chapter 8 looks to the role of individuals as members of the nation, whose experiences and associations are what draw the connections between space and time. Chapter 9 takes the relationship between space and individuals as its subject, and looks at the literary devices that connect these 'texts,' and how they create unique, flexible, and ever-changing relationships. It examines the idea of the 'open text' as an opposition to the

closed, bounded, or retrospective narrative, and as a mode of imagining that gives room for life and difference, as opposed to power and death.

So, while *Inter-textual nation* has ended up as a 'single author study' of sorts, its aim was—and remains—to examine the novel in its contemporary form and seek within it an alternative to the problematic framework of the nation that currently dominates discourse. This framework is presented in the final section, New Aesthetics, which represents a first application of the constellation as a model to re-think not only the foundational properties of the nation, but also to think through other phenomenon. An inter-textual aesthetics of reading Arabic literature is put forward as a frame of evaluation that can make sense of complex and non-linear phenomenon, and to understand the multifarious possibilities of linkage between elements that have previously been understood as unconnected, or unseen through current reading aesthetics. An inter-textual aesthetics escapes the tautological paradigm of development that distinguishes thinking about Arabic literature today. In offering the cumulative results of a study of Palestinian fiction as a possible aesthetic within which to carry out analysis and interpretation of other works, and indeed a way of better understanding a whole universe of texts, this project contributes to a move that seeks to frameworks for knowledge from non-dominant spheres, in the hopes that seeing the world through them might reveal a host of new possibilities for thought.

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[1] Interview with author, Amman, Jordan, November 2016.

[2] Raba'ī Madhūn's *Maṣā'ir* [Destinies]. Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-'Arabīya li al-Dirāsāt wa 'an Nashr, 2015, was awarded the IPAF in April 2016 in what the eminent literary critic Faisal Darraj called the first "complete" Palestinian novel (see: Azizah Ali, "Faisal Darraj lecturs on Raba'ī Madhūn's *Maṣā'ir*," *al-Ghad,* August 24, 2015. Accessed 28 April at http://www.alghad.com/articles/889019-مصائر-الممدهون-ربع-رواية-عن-يحاضر-دراج-في-صل). For her part, 'Adanīyah Shiblī was given the AM Qattan Foundation's Young Writer of the Year award in 2004 and 2006, with both works immedieately translated into English by Clockroot Books in 2010 and 2012.

[3] Allen, *Introduction to Arabic Literature*, 79, 163, 177.

[4] Allen, *Introduction to Arabic Literature*, 79.

[5] Sabri Hafiz. "Intertextuality and the Semiotics of the Literary Work." [Arabic] *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 1984: 7-32.

[6] There is of course justifiable debate over 'when' the first novel was published in Arabic, mostly now around the very impetus for dating such an event. Attention has now largely turned to—and will turn in the final chapter here—exploring the changes and intermerging of literary traditions as dynasties fell and colonialism/postcolonialism (again the periodization) imposed a particular logic of telling on huge swaths of populations. That said, within the earlier discourse, the 'first novel' or at least the 'precursor to the first novel' is at times attributed to Shidyāq (see footnote 5).

[7] Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*, 102.

[8] See Luc-Willy Deheuvels *et al*., *Intertextuality in Modern Arabic Literature Since 1967*. Durham, U.K: Durham University, 2006.
[9] Fabio Caiani, *Contemporary Arab Fiction: Innovation from Rama to Yalu*. London: Routledge, 2007, 99.
[10] Samah Selim, *The Novel and the Rural Imaginary in Egypt, 1880-1985*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004, viii.
[11] Selim, *Novel and the Rural Imaginary,* 58.
[12] Selim, *Novel and the Rural Imaginary,* 58.
[13] "Author Profile: Naguib Mahfouz." World Literature Today. 79.2, 2005: 45.
[14] Elias Khoury, *Sīnaīkuī : Riwāyat*. Bayrūt: Dār al-ādāb, 2012.
[15] Felix Lang, *The Lebanese Post-Civil War Novel*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 154.
[16] Aghacy, Samira. "Elias Khoury's the Journey of Little Gandhi: Fiction and Ideology." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 28.2, 1996, 169.
[17] Rasheed El-Enany, *Naguib Mahfouz*. London: Routledge, 1993, 77, 81, 91-2, 139.
[18] Johnson, Rebecca, "Introuction," in Shidyāq, Ahmad F, Humphrey T. Davies, Rebecca C. Johnson, Michael Cooperson, *Leg Over Leg: Volumes One and Two*. New York: New York University Press, 2015. Kindle Version, loc 145-304.
[19] See, for example, Deheuvels, Luc-Willy, Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, and Paul Starkey. *Intertextuality in Modern Arabic Literature Since 1967*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, 5-7.
[20] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 3.
[21] See note 19 for a short discussion of post-national writings.
[22] Peeren, Esther, "Through the lens of the chronotope: Suggestions for a spatio-temporal perspective on diaspora," in Baronian, Marie-Aude, Stephan Besser, and Yolande Jansen [Eds]. *Diaspora and Memory: Figures of Displacement in Contemporary Literature, Arts and Politics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi) 2007, 67.
[23] See, for example: Balibar, Etienne. "The Nation Form: History and Ideology." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 13.3, 1990: 329–361; Pease, Donald E.. "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives." *boundary 2* 19.1, 1992: 1–13.
[24] See, for example: Glick Schiller, Nina; "Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework For Understanding Migration." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 645, 1992,1–24.
[25] See, for example, the outlining of developments in association with the nation and the novel form from the pre-colonial era in the Levant in: El Sadda, Hoda. *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
[26] Yves, "The territory of autobiography," in *Writing the self*, 188.
[27] Caiani, *Contemporary Arab Fiction*, 26.
[28] Ostle, Robin. "From intertext to mixed media: the case of Edwārd al-Kharraṭ," in *Intertextuality in Modern Arabic Literature Since 1967*, 136.
[29] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, xii.
[30] Ghassān Kanafānī, forward to first edition of *Mā tabaq'a likum*, titled "A Clarification," as translated by Roger Allen, in Wild, Stefan. *Ghassan Kanafani: The life of a Palestinian*. Wisebaden: Hassarowitz, 1975, xxi.
[31] Roger Allen, "preface" in Wild, Stefan. *Ghassan Kanafani: The life of a Palestinian*. Wisebaden: Hassarowitz, 1975, xxi.
[32] Ostle, Robin. "From intertext to mixed media: the case of Edwārd al-Kharraṭ," in *Intertextuality in Modern Arabic Literature Since 1967*, 136.
[33] Barbara Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994, 2.
[34] Nadia Yaqub, "Waiting, a scattered people waiting for a shared future," in *Film in the Middle East and North Africa*, Josef Gugler [Ed] (Austin: University of Texas Press), 2011.
[35] Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 12.

[36] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. London: Verso, 2003, 35-38.

Part I—Inter-textual Nation

An inter-textual nation assumes a disarticulation of the concepts and processes that made it possible to imagine the modern nation-state; it is almost precisely the reverse of what Benedict Anderson described in his *Imagined Communities*, where imagining a national community became possible because of a "spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, they became 'modular'."[1] An inter-textual nation not only takes apart this "modularized" idea—which for Anderson sees structures of relation, dynasty and print culture cohere and calcify—but adds elements to those counted among Anderson's "discrete historical forces." These include structures of family, of gender, of 'tradition,' and of the nation-state itself. At the same time, an inter-textual nation disrupts and re-formulates the relationships between its new and already-catalogued parts. It allows a new look at the intersections of power structures that knit a community together. Perhaps most importantly, the inter-textual nation is no longer modular; the new "discrete historical forces" identified as part of its post-colonial—and here specifically Palestinian—make up, do not 're-distil' or form an alternative modular structure. In its re-formulation the inter-textual nation radically re-imagines what it means to belong to a specifically national community that exists within diverse spaces and through time. It not only re-thinks the components of the nation, but it also re-formulates the very processes by which the national community is thought. This includes concepts of space, of how historical time fills up that space, and of the structures of power that make these ways of imagining possible.

The concept of the inter-textual nation emerged out of the study of Palestinian novels, and the idea that, if the novel (as Anderson claims) is a "precise analogue" of the nation, and if Homi Bhabha was correct in writing that nations are in fact "narrations,"[2] then it must be possible to trace the shape of the Palestinian nation from the texts that imagine it. Looking specifically at the Palestinian novel written in Arabic, whose development "ran parallel to and intersected with projects of nation building in the modern period,"[3] this endeavour aims to locate a contemporary projection of the Palestinian national community from within. It goes on to suggest that the mechanisms of imagining can best be described as inter-textual,

and later sections will describe how the concept of the constellation helps to create a projection of this inter-textual nation. The inter-textual nation as a mechanism for imagining the links between parts of the national community breaks through what must first be identified as Palestine's nation-state paradox. It provides a way to link place, space, time, and people in a way that surpasses and works through a structure of thought that inherently restricts the possibilities of imagining a contemporary Palestinian community with all its complex reality.

Despite the seeming impossibility of imagining a Palestinian national community through available frameworks, the promise of the nation (beginning with the form of the nation-state) remains one that is "endowed with magical powers to ensure a happy destiny for the collective and the individual. It is the ultimate project of collective and individual liberation."[4] It thus constitutes an obvious aim for a disinherited people, not least because national belonging is nearly synonymous with political participation internationally. At the same time, Palestinians have seen globalization cut "lines of exclusion"[5] around the places they live, and individuals across the Middle East are forced to live "simultaneously inside and outside of multiple overlapping boundaries."[6] Without a nation-state and all that this means today, Palestinians wherever they are live with an "uneven mobility over a stratified territory."[7] These realities have a resounding impact on what Palestine means to Palestinians, and how it is understood in a national sense. The experience of Palestinians, what it means to belong, then, "is postnational in the sense that national boundaries need no longer concern the citizenry. They [Palestinians] can conceptualize a Palestinian state, with citizenship but with residency elsewhere."[8] The realities of daily life and long-term politics have meant that thinking the nation along the lines of the state model can only result in alienation. As a people with strong claims to national identity and centuries of organizing into various collectives, it should come as no surprise that contemporary alternatives to the dominant model are already in practise—even if they have yet to be codified or recognized.

While the inter-textual nation is an idea not necessarily limited to the Palestinian context (indeed, there is much to recommend it as an alternative model more generally), there are some clear reasons why the idea emerges out of Palestinian nationalism. As the first chapter below will outline, the Palestinian national community is missing both of the central components of the imagined nation as Anderson defined them: borders and sovereignty. So,

while Palestinian nationalism imagines a community along the same lines as other similar communities—where there is an imagined bond between individuals that is made up of a multiplicity of factors beyond religion, kinship, or clan—it does so without the very architecture that made the national (as Anderson describes it) possible in the first place. This first part of writing will begin, then, by unpacking Palestine's 'nation-state paradox,' and examining the literary and theoretical mechanisms that restrict–and therefore necessitate an alternative—imagination of the national in the Palestinian case. Chapter 2 will go on to set out the beginnings of a structure of the inter-textual nation, and will introduce the methodology—if it can be called thus—by which this inter-textual nation is drawn out as a model for imagined linkages.

Although this thesis almost exclusively examines a subset of works written by one Palestinian author, its argument and its impetus are based on a much wider and long-term reading project that included the now classic and the overlooked of Palestinian literary figures writing in the contemporary period. The question of inter-textuality as a way of imagining being developed uniquely in Palestinian fiction first became apparent through parallel readings of novels by Imīl Ḥabībī and Ḥusayn Jamīl Barghūthī,[9] whose works both make heavy use of external references and frame texts.[10] Once attuned to the device, however, inter-textuality can be discerned in operation as a method of telling almost ubiquitous in Palestinian narratives. The four distinct narratives of Ghassān Kanafānī's protagonists in *Rijāl fī ash-shams* (1962) [Men in the Sun], for example, are united in the world of the water tanker that sees the men killed as they are forcibly bought together in a bounded space, traveling in a line across the desert en route to the Gulf. The symbolic cousins of Sahar Khalifah's *al- Ṣubbār* [Wild Thorns] (1976) who work within the novel to tell two very different political stories about the same contemporary Palestine; or 'Adanīya Shiblī's patchwork *Massas* (2002) [Touch], which can only tell the life of Palestine and its young heroine through the description of multiple and myriad sensory experiences, finding a way of perception that goes beyond place or time.

A full assessment of the breadth and depth of the device as it is used and developed within each author's oeuvre, and even between authors, however, is beyond the scope of this study. To attempt such a work at this juncture would drive attention away from the technique itself and what it encounters in favour of a survey of the field, in danger of becoming a look

at the development of Palestinian literature and its similarities and differences amongst and between locations. This risks getting trapped in the very paradigm that the technique of the inter-textual nation seeks to overcome and think beyond. Instead, focusing on one author, Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, and two of his fascinatingly intertwined writing projects, gives more space and time to a look at the technique itself; what it encounters, and what it achieves. This is, after all, just a beginning, and work will remain through comparative readings and extended studies, to address possible missing components, concepts, or mechanisms of imagining the nation. For now, then, I approach Naṣrallāh like he approaches his books: Asked at a launch event in Ramallah in April 2016 when he will write a novel set in Jerusalem (a setting notably and significantly absent thus far), he replied, "every book is about Jerusalem," just like any book about Jerusalem would also be the story of the rest of Palestine. The works are in no way constitutive or representative of contemporary Palestinian literature, but are, at least in a starting way, constituted by the field.

Naṣrallāh does, however, himself represent a fascinating entry into contemporary Palestinian literature. Born in Amman's Wiḥdāt refugee camp in 1954 to parents who fled a village outside Jerusalem for safety in 1948,[11] Naṣrallāh has authored some 15 novels and 14 collections of poetry, in addition to works of children's literature, cinematic criticism, and short stories. While he is a writer of wide talents, one particular endeavour provides tantalizing material for an investigation of the intertextual. From the early 1980s, Naṣrallāh began a project to write the Palestinian national story; what he initially envisioned as the national epic that critics had been waiting for since the early 1970s.[12] He, like others, saw that while there are novels about the 'Palestinian experience,' and novels that eloquently portray the tragedy of Palestinian loss, the legacy of exile, and the realities of 'place-less-ness,' there is no single work that has been able to tell the Palestinian national story in a way that wholly encapsulates the many trajectories of historic, modern, and contemporary Palestinian national life. That Naṣrallāh was also unable to write one single novel to tell the story of Palestine, and in fact ended up writing (and in fact continues to write) 12 novels (and counting) that together tell the story of Palestine, is the phenomenon that this thesis takes as a sort of case study. Instead of writing Palestine as an epic novel, he ended up writing it as a book series, employing intertextuality to imaginatively connect times and places when the basic structure of the novel proved too rigid.

What drove Naṣrallāh to even think of writing the national epic, the obstacles blocking such a work, and the very depth of exploration achieved through such a vast body of texts, collectively provide the material to work through the central questions of this project. In examining what is understood as one single literary project, close readings of the texts themselves are what develop an emerging theory of inter-textuality, the inter-textual nation, and ultimately, the 'nation constellation.' This project aims to trace the idea being developed in Naṣrallāh's works as examples of a concept that is in fact part of a wider phenomenon. Starting first, then, with the impetus for such a project, Chapter 1 will lay out a general set of theoretical issues that form the backbone of not only the problem of writing a Palestinian national epic, but also its solution. Chapter 2 will go on to introduce Naṣrallāh and his project more fully, so that his works can be read on their own terms, and insight drawn from a close and critical reading of the multiple and overlapping symbols, themes, forms, and structures of narrative being developed. These texts will form the core of the chapters in Parts II, III, and IV. It will not be until the final section of this project that the sum total of Naṣrallāh's work and its innovations within the field of Palestinian literature will be placed back into its context in the field of Arabic Literature.

This 'backward' logic, I hope, will give space for the novels and the questions they unearth to drive the development of an alternative theory of the nation, which can—once complete—be understood in a larger context. The aim of this is to conceptually and intellectually carve out the space for Palestinian literature to respond to its own context, and avoid having its insights lost in a comparison. The idea is that, developed on their own, the narrative framework being innovated in the texts creates a distinct paradigm of belonging, with new pathways to thinking about space, place, and people. It is into this that other fields and contexts can be placed. Positing the texts as the core of the work is what enables a 'whole' idea of the Palestinian nation to emerge, and also reveals the mechanisms by which this nation–and its literary works—and takes part in wider debates about genre, narrative, and nation.

Chapter 1 – Palestine's nation-state paradox

Writing the national novel in Arabic Literature generally, and Palestinian Literature in particular, has since the 1950s been considered an act of resistance. In the late 1960s Palestinian writer Ghassān Kanafānī coined the term "resistance literature," in his *Adab al-muqāwama fī filaṣtīn al-muḥtalla: 1948-1966,*[13] where he outlined the ways that Palestinians living in what had become Israel were using poetry to assert their heritage and even existence amidst a state that excluded them. Using and adapting traditional and folk poetry to rally communities for demonstrations and to pass on political messages, poetry in "Filaṣtīn al-muḥtalla" (occupied Palestine) became more and more complex in ways that responded directly to the conditions of erasure that Palestinians faced.[14] As Barbara Harlow later put it, national resistance movements are not just military, but are "waged at the same time as a struggle over the historical and cultural record."[15] Since, as Michael Shapiro noted in his look at contemporary notions of citizenship and belonging, "The symbolic maintenance of the nation-state requires a management of historical narratives as well as territorial space,"[16] those historical narratives are very much tied into cultural ones, making literature a key feature of resistance to dominant and dominating stories. The novel, as the preeminent genre of the nation,[17] and the genre within which the nation has been imagined,[18] therefore marks the ultimate site of resistance to the form that made realities invisible.

It became, then, the problem of writers and artists to answer questions like those of Edward Said, who asked: "Is there any place that fits us, together with our accumulated memories and experiences?"[19]It fell to the cultural realm to imagine the destruction of an oppressive system, and to think a place so that a nation might be claimed within it. This question hit on the first element of Palestine's nation-state paradox; that of location, and of the space within which the nation can be imagined to exist. It is the *a priori* of a national disinheritance: without land a national people cannot be claimed. Even more than this, if a 'land' exists, it must be claimed in terms of borders and sovereignty; no other paradigm—particularly for imagining the entirety of a national community that is somehow post-Westphalian—is readily available.[20] As the first sub-section below will trace, the novel and indeed the nation-state are imagined in terms of territory, and in terms of a modern notion

of territory that is sovereign, limited, and bounded. It is only within this sort of space that a nation—according to the dominant mode—can be imagined.

A second question points to a parallel problematic, again posed by Said: "When no straight line leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity, all events are accidents, all progress is digression, all residence is exile."[21] The straight line is history and one that reaches backward retrospectively over the linear time of the present nation. This becomes, for Palestinian literature, the 'question of time,' and of developing non-linear representations of simultaneous experience. The theoretical and literary foundations for this question will be laid out in the second sub-section below.

The in many ways parallel sections lay out the points at which the inter-textual nation

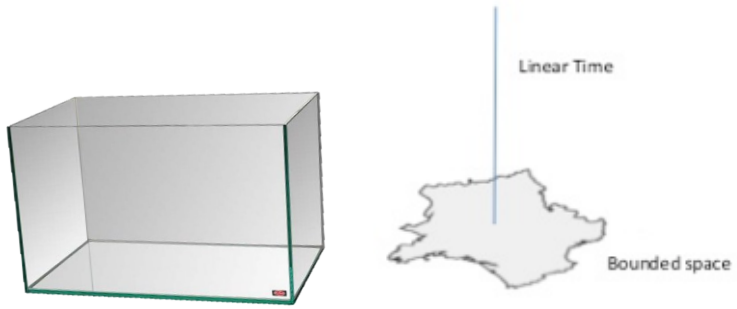

Figure 1: The nation in 'homogenious empty time'

departs radically from the idea of the nation-state as it developed in 19th Century Europe. They ostensibly lay out the literary foundations and embedded assumptions of Benedict Anderson's claim that the novel represents a "precise analogue" of the modern nation-state; examining in turn the 'problem of territory,' and the 'question of time.' These problems together form the Palestinian paradox. Where Palestine is imagined as a national community along the practical lines of the modern paradigm, the foundations of the process whereby the nation-state is imagined (in bounded space and linear time see [Figure 1]) simply do not accord with Palestinian realities. As such, it is these premises—of thinking space and time—that are re-imagined and at times thwarted in order for an alternative paradigm of national community to emerge.

The problem of territory

The question of territory has been seminal for Palestinians since the late days of the Ottoman Empire. This is precisely because as a people they were dispossessed of land at a

time when the nation-state and its attendant nationalism were becoming the ordering principles of the modern world. In order to be modern—and certainly to gain what remains the only route to self-determination and 'freedom,'—one needed a nation-state. This is because the question of territory had by then become the linchpin in contemporary concepts of nation, sovereignty, and belonging, not to mention narrative. Territory and particular concepts of space developed in Europe during the colonial era came to form the very setting for national narratives. The way space was narrated would later also come to shape how space could be thought.[22] So while it is the dispossession of Palestinians that brought attention to the question of territory as the basis for not only claims to sovereignty but also to national narrative, a close examination of how space is articulated in national terms reveals deep assumptions linking the possibilities of thinking and talking about space. These assumptions ultimately restrict how narratives can be structured, presuming a 'homogeneous' space and a set of pre-determined links between people, space, and time; these links preclude the narrative of a Palestinian community in national terms, so long as national refers to the dominant model of the nation-state developed in Europe.

In his historical overview of western conceptions of *Spatiality*, Robert T. Tally explains how these connections stem from an early link between space and narrative. By the "early modern era," he notes, the "map becomes a preeminent form of knowledge and power."[23]It is in this period, Tally explains, that space began to be articulated as a "container into which god placed the material universe."[24] This would have a significant impact on how space was understood, and in narrative terms, in the early modern era "space appeared to matter only as the location where historical events unfolded."[25] Space thus became a location of history, a container for time, so that narrative was dictated by the "flow of time"[26] as it moved within space. The power of place is then at the root of narrative, and as French theorist Henri Lefebvre argues, it is also at the root of the very process of thought.

In his *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre looks at how space is thought, and how this pattern of imagination goes on to dictate how thinking happens. He finds that the production of space is "indistinguishable from knowledge."[27] How we think space and how we think are tied to the same set of invisible assumptions. Thinking space as a container for time means understanding time-within-space as the driving factor for narrative; this of course has drastic implications. Tally draws out the links explicitly, observing that the

confluence of mechanisms for thinking (producing) space and understanding how time filled that space "shaped the way in which nations and populations were understood."[28] These concepts of space become so embedded in thought, as Lefebvre illustrated, that they underpin (largely without comment) Benedict Anderson's discussion of nationalism, and the very process by which a national community came to be imagined. So, where Anderson defined the imagined national community as a "solid community moving up (or down) history,"[29] unmentioned but assumed[30] is the necessity of a demarcated nation-space, where "solid" really means "bounded" and in particular, "bordered." It also assumes a linear 'homogeneous and empty' historical time fills that space.

This embeddedness of an early 19th century notion of space and how it holds people and events to make meaning becomes hugely relevant to the theoretical landscape within which Palestinian authors write. This is particularly so when we acknowledge the stark truth of Anderson's declaration that "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time."[31] Anderson's proof for the importance of nationalism –and imagining the nation as a nation-state—is what he calls the continuing succession of revolutions that use a national frame to gain legitimacy, as well as a continuous stream of states joining the United Nations.[32] So, when he says "nation-ness" or nationalism, it is clear that the imagined national community (at least in so far as the phenomenon of nationalism that he describes) means specifically its form as the nation-state. Anderson's imagined communities, then, are those contained within the thick-lined borders of the geopolitical map, and assume a particular relationship between space and the flows of historical time. Given the contemporary practical impossibility of imagining Palestine's physical location within a system of narrative built upon a structure of thinking premised on the nation as a geo-spatial container for time and therefore history (as well as narrative), how can Palestine as a national community be imagined? How can the story of a Palestinian community be communicated when "The Palestinian predicament is a disordered experience of geography and space and time"?[33] How is the nation imagined when Palestinian "identities are not affixed to singular places but are embedded in trajectories of exile which have a point of origin in Palestine"?[34] Indeed, if part of the embedded grammar of narrative is the assumption of a bounded space/nation-state, how can Palestinians narrate their collective identity, since in the modern sense Palestinian identity

is intimately tied to the "dislocation [that] launched the Palestinians on an objectifying pursuit of place"?[35]

With an estimated population of some 10 million worldwide,[36] the broadest possible location for Palestine would be the homes and histories of each of the nation's refugees and exiles across the globe. More conservatively, there are still 59 official refugee camps 'outside' the area of Mandate Palestine in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria as well as 'inside' in the West Bank, what is today Israel, and Gaza Strip.[37] This is not yet taking into account the non-refugee populations who remained in their cities and villages, that although in a land earmarked for Palestinian 'independence,' are cut up and fragmented between Israel, and the Palestinian Authority, which is today further sub-divided into the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as administrative zones marked A, B, and C under the Oslo Accords. Moreover, large communities of Palestinians have made homes in the Gulf and even internationally.

This, of course, is only a contemporary snapshot of the physical or geopolitical locations of Palestine, which before 1967, and before 1948, were different still. Moreover, the dots on a geopolitical map indicating locations of refugee camps, or Palestinian cities in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, or Syria do not represent the massive flux and flow of refugees (including economic refugees), moving with the shifting patterns of war and truce. Even simple existence at a location, however, means little, when the community "does not possess its own earth, air, or water."[38] Without control over space under the current nation-state paradigm, attempts at Palestinian community making are subject to the whims of other states whose borders Palestinian lives criss-cross.

The contemporary Palestinian nation must somehow be simultaneously imagined with its roots in the geographical area around which the British Mandate over Palestine drew its borders,[39] and include the trajectory of its peoples in multiple locations of de facto 'home' that span the globe. The imagination of a Palestinian community must also make room for the reality of change, in particular as visions for future sovereignty shift. Even Palestine's leadership has been prey to an unstable geography, moving from Jordan to Lebanon to Tunis to Ramallah. Waves of violence throughout the Middle East further churned the

community of Palestinian exiles so that a map of physical and historic locations would be a dizzying and unreadable jumble.

So, to go back to Said's question, "Is there any place that fits us, together with our accumulated memories and experiences?"[40] The answer is that if "any place" must mean a bounded geography of the nation-state –what Anderson describes as the "bounded community"—today's answer would remain 'no.' A nation-state, a bounded community, with borders, and a 'classically' national history, are, in the words of Palestinian geographer Helga Tawil-Souri "impossible in a context in which people find it difficult to grasp their surroundings or define their location."[41] So, while Tim Edensor has found that national "space is produced by inhabitants through habit…through constant engagement with the world which relies on familiar routines, which constructs an on-going spatial mapping though the enaction of everyday mobilities,"[42] spaces of Palestinian national experience cannot always be easily claimed as such, since they all too often trod on the sovereignty of other nations, now, or in the past. To answer Said in the positive, space must be somehow re-defined. As one French writer, who sought to map the realities of contemporary Ramallah noted, however, when it comes to approaching concepts of space in the Palestine context, "I'm not sure there are words for it."[43]

The question of time

Embedded in Said's question of place is the question of time. Not only is there no 'place' that fits contemporary Palestinian community; neither is there a single timeline. This is principally because time, like space, is understood in a set pattern. Concepts of time, moreover, are linked almost inseparably to space: as Mikhail Bakhtin described, "In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values."[44] In his essay, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin discussed how "every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope,"[45] or, every narrative is a process of meant inscribing phenomenon into pre-determined concepts of linked space and time.

And so it is with the concept of the nation. As Etienne Balibar has described, the nation is very specifically inscribed within a chronotope. As he states it: "The history of nations, beginning with our own, is always already presented to us in the form of a narrative."[46] The narrative, he continues, is very much set in both space and time. National narratives, he

says, attribute to the nation "the continuity of a subject," so that the present shape and values of the nation are read backwards into linear time. "It consists in believing that the process of development from which we select aspects retrospectively, so as to see ourselves in the culmination of that process, was *the only one possible*, that is, it represented a destiny."[47] The process of national history, then, presents the present shape of the nation (its territory) as the end point of the past; a past that moves in a strait line toward a pre-determined and self-fulfilling present. In the novel, Kristeva calls this the phenomenon of the "bounded text," where each work sets out the limits of their own epistemology (the "nondisjunctive function of the novel").[48] She explains that in the world of the bounded text, works presume and explore binaries, and that discourse occurs (play with the tension between, say, old/new, present/absent) only because the binaries cannot—epistemologically—be resolved. For Kristeva, it is this fixed relationship between established binaries that produces meaning in the novel. For Balibar, the same idea of a fixed relationship—here between space and time—means that for, "An event can become communicated, it becomes information, [when] one can give precise data on the place and time of its occurrence."[49] It is as Bakhtin describes the function of the chronotope, where "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history."[50]

Linked, then, are the figuration of national history, and the particular mode of signification for the phenomenon of the nation (and its assumed territory), and the very possibility for discourse within both the nation and the novel. No wonder Said lamented not only the absence of a 'place' that fit the Palestinian community, but also the absence of a "straight line [that] leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity."[51] Within the dominant paradigm of national belonging, no straight line means the impossibility of meaning, the impossibility of belonging, the impossibility of a nation-state.

Under such terms, if there is no contained national space, there is no point of departure for the historical retrospective. As Peteet has described it, for many Palestinian refugees, "the present […] is perpetually its own beginning."[52] For Palestine, the contemporary fact of varying political imaginaries for a future geographic location of a would-be state means there is no stable goal for such a point of narrative retrospective. Differing end goals, in

narrative terms, mean different backward trajectories, and no way of incorporating disparate temporary places into a future time. This is why the Palestinian national experience has so often been categorized as one of *Waiting for Godot*,[53] where "Objectives no longer exist […so] time does not exist either, life is 'treading water,' so to speak […] before and after become like left and right, they lose their time character."[54] The absence of time, of place, and of narrative that Brecht's play captures, precisely identifies the snag for a 'classical' geography as a container for a narrative that can only guarantee the "representability of events"[55] when there are clear borders. It illustrates the issue at hand for the Palestinian novel as a mode of narrative that set out to tell the Palestinian story, but was faced with its structural impossibility.

Chapter 2 - Naṣrallāh's project

To tell the nation. This was the challenge that Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh took up when he embarked on a project to write the Palestinian national epic. In retrospect, Naṣrallāh explains his urge to write as one of resistance, of insistence, and of inscribing the realities of Palestinian national experience into the annals of literature:

> One day, I read a quote by the Zionist leader David Ben Gurion in which he spoke of the Palestinians in the following terms: "the old will die and the young will forget." I considered that saying to be the worst form of vituperation directed at the Palestinian people, equal in its debasing intent to that other Zionist sentence "had the Palestinians been a people then they would have had a literature." Since the mid-eighties, I have been working on a project that can speak to these statements.[56]

This, perhaps, was why Naṣrallāh had conceived the project as an epic, seeking to pen the irrefutable proof of a Palestinian nation within a cultural discourse that would then be forced to recognize it. As he began his project, Naṣrallāh carried out extensive research, including reading works of history, Palestinian memoir and biography, as well as conducting tens of interviews with Palestinian elders in Jordan and beyond. What became apparent in the process of writing was that no single novel was enough to tell the Palestinian story, or to adequately "speak to these statements" that denied Palestinian national existence. What would emerge from the effort was a massive collection of works,

each of which tackles the questions and paradoxes of Palestinian national identity and national community from different moments, perspectives, and locations.

His project uses the novel –specifically in its role as the format within which to tell that national epic—to reveal the realities of Palestinian collectives across space and time, and in doing so changes the foundational assumptions of the genre. Not only are the practice of writing and the 'plot' of the works inscribing a Palestinian national reality into the cultural sphere, but the novels are also changing the shape of power (or at the very least the assumptions that undergird its operation) so that it accommodates the reality they seek to express. The effort, which will be termed here the "Palestine project," encompasses two distinct collections of novels: *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya* [The Palestine Comedies], and the *Shurafāt* [Balconies]. By 2015, the two series had a combined total of 13 novels. Both are expected to expand in the years to come. What they achieve exceeds and surpasses anything that could be counted as a national epic, though *al-Malhāt*–which was the first series to emerge from the drive to write the Palestinian epic—has as a collected project been called epic.[57] This first collection of works tells a Palestinian national story that incorporates locations and figures as diverse as a leader in 17th century Tiberius, to two refugees stranded at a Gulf airport after fleeing the Lebanese Civil War, as well as everything that has happened since, or in-between. Each novel independently encounters different elements of the nation-state paradox, and makes use of literary device to stitch together and indeed re-imagine the relationships between space, time, and belonging. Much like the European national epic—said to capture a nation's heroic age and a certain essence of a people—Naṣrallāh's *al-Malhāt* sets out the foundations of a nation. It just so happens that these foundations are not the same as those that emerged in 19th century Europe, but rather rely on inter-textual links to think the nation outside of bounded space or linear time.

While the novels *al-Malhāt* focus on the structures–both narrative and social—that shape how Palestinian community is imagined in the absence of the state, the *Shurafāt*, prompted by the earlier novels, look directly at the nation-state, its structures and its links to the novel form. Since the first challenge of the nation-state paradox for Palestinian writing was to liberate the nation from the state frame, in *al-Malhāt* the structure of the state was by and large ignored. With the majority of Palestinians in the Middle East living subject to the state structures of regional nations, however, it was perhaps impossible for a theory of the

Palestinian nation to ignore the question of the nation-state. The insights of both series are fundamental to the literary encounter with the nation-state paradox, and ultimately it seems that the works of *al-Malhāī* pushed and prompted the inauguration and development of the *Shurafāt*, which in turn re-opened the first so that it might more comprehensively and sensitively tell the Palestinian national story. Together – and inter-textually—the two inter-linked series foundationally change how a national people can be imagined, and how their relationship with the nation state can be narrated.

The first series to emerge was *al-Malhāī*. A collection of eight novels to date (with more expected in the years to come), each is dedicated to expressing and investigating different aspects of Palestinian experience. The novels tell the story of Palestine from perspectives as diverse as a young boy whose coming of age is dictated by political events which shunt him from the West to the East Bank (*Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar*, 1996), to an Arab Liberation Army soldier who lost the battle for Jerusalem (*Ṭifl al-mimḥāt*, 2000); an orphan pimped out by her uncle in a refugee camp outside of Beirut during the era of PLO autonomy (*Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ*, 2002); twin sisters in Gaza City, each struggling in their own ways with norms of violence, patriarchy, and representation (*Aʿrās āmina*, 2004*)*; or a wayward would-be actor stifled by the corruption of post-Oslo Ramallah (*Taḥta shams al-ḍuḥā*, 2004); and even the son of an elder in a Galilee village as Palestine shifted from Ottoman to British and ultimately Zionist control (*Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍāʾ*, 2007).

The novels treat different times and places, and were published in no particular geographic or chronological order. None of the characters of the series appear in more than one text,[58] and no two novels treat the same time-space. With this diversity, *al-Malhāt* creates imaginative links between time, space, and experience. Its themes and publication order already beg questions like: Which events came 'first' in the Palestinian story? How do we read the experiences of externally displaced refugees within a larger Palestinian narrative? How can we reconcile the location of Palestine under Ottoman control with its new geopolitical 'location' post-1948? The resulting framework, the way that the series conjures a national community, is flexible, open-ended, and one that changes each time a new novel is added. Indeed, *Mujarrad 2 faqaṭ* (1991)—the story of two Palestinian teachers stranded in the Gulf during or shortly after Lebanon's war of the camps—was added retroactively to the series, published before the series was launched, but adopted with the series in 2014.

With such a compelling series, it is tempting to limit a national reading of Naṣrallāh's works to *al-Malhāt*. To focus on his explicitly Palestinian project, however, would be to miss perhaps the greatest achievements of this period of Naṣrallāh's writing. Intimately connected to *al-Malhāt*—addressing its limitations and innovating further ways of understanding the national as well as the structures of power that curtail it—are the *Shurafāt* [Balconies]. Conceived of as a parallel series, the first–*Shurfat al-hadhayān*—came out in 2005 immediately following an effusion of works in *al-Malhāt* [See Fig 1]. The most immediately distinguishing feature of the novel (and indeed all of the works of the second series) is that *Shurfat al-hadhayān* does not directly deal with a Palestinian national community. Indeed, Naṣrallāh has insisted that all of the novels of the series—four as of 2016—do not address a specifically Palestinian situation. Rather, Naṣrallāh says, they tackle wider phenomenon of the Arab world and beyond.[59] The settings of the *Shurafāt* underscore this difference: the novels are each set in unnamed cities with echoes of Amman but with few identifying markers. This stands in stark contrast to works of *al-Malhāt*, which map streets, fields, and families from Lebanon to the Gaza Strip to the Gulf. So where *al-Malhāt* took on the nation and extracted it from a state framework the *Shurafāt* take on the state, but with the lessons of the inter-textual Palestinian nation that begins to emerge from the first series. The two are, in fact, nearly indivisible.

Figure 2 below lays out the order of publication for the texts of *al-Malhāt*, and the increasingly intertwined publication history of its works and those of the *Shurafāt*. In bold below are the works that will be considered in this thesis, narrowed to what is identified as a critical juncture in the project, from its launch in 1996, to 2010, when works from both series began emerging rapidly and simultaneously. By 2012 the series were totally intertwined, with works coming out from each approximately every other year.

The Palestine Project		
al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya	**First published (Added to series)**	***Shurafāt***
Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar **Birds of Caution**	**1996 (2000)**	
Ṭifl al-mimḥāt **Eraser Child**	**2000**	
Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ **Olives of the Streets**	**2002**	
Aʿrās āmina **Amina's Weddings**	**2004**	
Taḥta shams al-ḍuḥā **Under the Midmorning Sun**		
	2005	***Shurfat al-hadhayān*** **Balcony of Delirium**
Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍāʾ **Time of White Horses**	**2007**	
	2009	***Shurfat rajul al-thalj*** **Balcony of the Snow Man**
	2010	***Shurfat al-ʿār*** **Balcony of Disgrace**
Qanādīl malik al-jalīl Lanterns of the King of the Galilee	2012	
	2013	*Shurfat al-hāwiya* Balcony of the Abyss
Mujarrad 2 faqaṭ Just the Two of Us	1991 (2014)	
	2014	*Shurfat al-firdaūs* Balcony of Paradise

Figure 2: List of 'Palestine project' works to date.

The proliferation of series, and the development of one project—to tell the national story of Palestine—into two distinct branches, came as the drive to write a Palestinian narrative bumped into and was obstructed by the elements of the nation-state paradox. So where *al-Malhāt* began by writing a specifically national story that crosses the conceptual borders of history and geography, in the process it encountered issues of power and representation that undergird the national and its narratives. For example, in *Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ*, national symbols are used to gain power within a patriarchal system. This power, even though it is exercised in the name of the nation, oppresses the work's protagonist Salwā, an orphan who

is raised by her uncle and pimped out to a PLO official. Framed as a story about a Lebanese journalist trying to write a sort of popular account of Salwā's abuse (or really, PLO corruption), the novel dredges up connections between nation, power, and patriarchy, and how these collude to make telling Salwā's story impossible. The structures of power that prevented the young woman's story from being told, or even from being heard, are not unconnected to the structures of thought that created the imagined national community as Anderson described it. Both nation and narrative are revealed as responsive to and indeed products of wider and at times invisible power structures. These power structures do not, however, include that of the nation-state—an apparatus within which Palestinians have lived and died since the Nakba. While the series grapples with some of the components of power taken on by the modern apparatus of the state, it almost necessarily leaves out the question of what it means to live within this model of a nation.

The *Shurafāt*, then, explore what it means to live within a state and to seek to tell that experience, in particular how multiple and competing structures of power serve to constrict and delimit the possibilities of life and narrative. Since a Palestinian state has only very recently been declared—and remains variously recognized internationally— [60] the exploration of the state in the *Shurafāt* almost necessarily excluded the representation of Palestinians, in particular Palestinians as members of the Palestinian national community. So, while cases can (and in some cases perhaps should) be made to read the characters of the *Shurafāt* as Palestinian, the novels make no claims to represent Palestinian characters. Naṣrallāh has in fact insisted that the novels are specifically not about the Palestinian case, and represent a more broad experience of life in the Middle East, and in particular under Arab governments. While each of the novels engages in highly critical portrayals of and grapplings with the state as a violent structure and indeed a narrative frame, the subject matter of each of the texts is the mundane, the everyday. The novels have as their base characters family units of varying sizes, living in residential neighbourhoods of unidentified Arab cities. Each of the novels has protagonists who become part of the infrastructure of the state system, through work as public officials, employees at state newspapers, or being taken up within the legal or penal systems. In this way each protagonist becomes a direct subject of the nation-state as an apparatus, and the novels portray the mechanisms by which the state constricts and controls what is possible.

Living their everyday lives the protagonists encounter state surveillance and regulations administered through any number of its bureaucratic bodies. What becomes apparent is that the state acts as a violent and imposing narrative frame. More than that, the frame of the state seems, in the second of the *Shurafāt*, to supersede the state. The conventions of the state no longer simply represent the state-structure, but can be seen in a wider view to represent the basic parameters of an episteme. The state, as only one structure formed within more over-arching limits to possible thought, is shown to be buttressed, underpinned, and to exist alongside other structures of power. As a single Palestine project the series explore the realities of Palestinian nationhood and how to narrate its diversity, given the nation's link to the state through both the concepts of territoriality and sovereignty. Within this project, the *al-Malhāt* de-link the idea of nation from the concepts of state, while the *Shurafāt* give a wider but more concrete context to the lives and concepts developed in *al-Malhāt* by investigating the supra-structure of the state system within which Palestinian nationalism exists. As a combined project, the works round out a re-thinking of the imaginative and practical structures that go into the prevailing notion of the nation-state, and show how the Palestinian nation can be imagined not only within, but also above these structures.

Each in their own way, the novels of the *Shurafāt* (and the latter works of *al-Malhāt*) are able to take a position above and at the same time within structures of power. They look in turn at the way invisible social and administrative structures shape how individuals act within and interpret the world (*Shurfat al-hadhayān*, 2004), the limitations of state and narrative in accessing truth (*Shurfat rajul al-thalj*, 2009), and the seemingly inherent problem shared by contemporary structures of state, family, and class, of imposing narratives on anyone acting within their assumed purview (*Shurfat al-'ār*, 2010). Not only do the novels of the *Shurafāt* explore the nature of structures of power, they also show how these structures participate in (and even to a large degree dictate the possibilities of) narrative.

Not only do the two series' thematically build on one another, tackling different components of the problems of narrative, but their literary experimentation also spurred developments in how to think the two series as a single project. In order to achieve its disruption of the silent restrictions on thought and action imposed by the foundations of the

nation-state, *Shurfat al-hadhayān* (the first of the Balconies) uses radical inter-textuality to thwart easy assumptions about text and context. This not only drew on some of the innovations of the first series, but pushed thinking on the project to such an extreme, that—although *al-Malhaī* was meant to conclude with the 2007 publication of *Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍāʾ*—it instead became an open-ended project. The radical inter-textuality of *Hadhayān* had opened up the idea of a multiple and flexible structure of community and thought, that came to be adopted in *al-Malhaī* and the wider Palestine project.

Collectively, these innovations also made possible an interrogation of the very concept of the text and representation. Using radical inter-textuality within and between works, the novels of the series push the idea of the text and how it functions relationally to its imaginative limits. In the process, the novels teach their readers how to make visible and understand the structures of even the most invisible texts (be they national symbols, gender structures, or family norms). What can be traced from the collective of works is a national imaginary that is non-linear and open-ended, and which makes room for additional texts regardless of their geographic or temporal settings. It does this through innovations in literary technique. Eschewing 'traditional' modes of national development, a reading of the Palestine project reveals an imagination of Palestine that produces its own logic; one shaped by a network of de-modularized locations and structures re-integrated through a national frame.

New national links

While neither characters nor time-spaces recur from one work of the Palestine project to the next, the novels collectively develop a shared set of symbols. Looking at one example will show first just how intertwined the two series are, making the case for a reading of the wider project they are a part of, and showing how the works make use of a variety of methods to push thinking on the way texts can be related. Works from each collection make overt reference to Ibn Manẓur's 13th century compendium the *Lisān al-ʿarab* (Tongue of the Arabs), a source considered the penultimate reference work for definitions and collected word usage from the Arabic language. It is, in essence, a repository, an almost definitive history of the possibilities of language from the early period. In each case, the novels of the Palestine project bring into their stories excerpts from the *Lisān* in order to challenge its

position as a historical and cultural compendium. The examples prompt readers to re-think how knowledge the *Lisān* catalogues came to be the definitive reference for Arabic, and how that same process of collection and collectivization remains at work today. In their play with the early text, the novels collectively re-open the process of meaning-making, foregrounding the process by which the nation will be figured throughout the project.

On *Malhāt* and its roots.

Lahā bi-alshay, lahwan: To be distracted by something,
Lahwan, lihīānan ʿan: To be impassioned by it.
Lahā, Lihyanan: If you forget it and cease to mention it, and if you turn a blind eye and neglect it.
Lahat: A woman is entertained with the goings on of women: She is amused and absorbed by it.
Lāhia (lāhia qulūbu-hum): God almighty said: (their hearts are distracted from what they are asked to do)
Talāh-ha: And he said: (wa anta ʿanhu talahha) To him, you pretend to be busy.
Talā-hu: They are occupied with each other.
Lahāwtu bih: I loved him.
Laahi: The person who is Laahi towards something, is inseperable from it.
Someone **Laaha** an object: To bring it closer
Lāha al-ghulām: The boy is getting closer to weaning.
Luhwa and Luhīa: An offering. And it is said that it is the best and most generous of any giving.

(*Lisān al-ʿarab*)

في الملهاة وجذورها

لَهَا بالشيء، لهوا: أولع به.
لَهَا، لِـهْيانا عن: إذا سلوتَ عنه وتركت ذكره وإذا غفلت عنه.
ولَـهَت المرأةُ إلى حديث المرأة: أنِست به وأعجبها.
قال تعالى (لاهية قلوبهم) أي متشاغلة عما يُدعَونَ إليه. وقال (وأنت عنه تلهّى) أي تتشاغل.
وتلاهوا: أي لها بعضهم ببعض.
ولهوت به: أحببته.
والإنسان اللاهي إلى الشيء: الذي لا يفارقه. وقال: لاهى الشيء أي داناه وقاربه. ولاهى الغلامُ الفطَامَ إذا دنا منه.
واللُّهوَةُ واللُّهْيةُ: العَطِيَّة. وقيل: أفضل العطايا وأجزلها.

(لسان العرب)

Figure 3: An excerpt (right) that appears in the backmatter of each of works in *al-Malhāt al-filaṣṭīnīyya*, and its rough translation (left)

In their most recent editions, each of the works in *al-Malhāt al-filaṣṭīnīyya* has, tucked away at the back, a quoted entry from Ibn Manẓur's 13th century *Lisān al-ʿarab* [Figure 3]. Found amidst the novel's backmatter, the 10-line entry is given the title "Of *al-Malhāt* and its roots." The passage goes on to give the definitions of words that derive from the root l-h-w, of which *al-Malhāt* (comedies) is one. The entry, though credited to the *Lisān al-ʿarab,* does not reproduce the full dictionary definition (see Appendix 1), a reproduction of which would take up some six pages, as it does in the most ubiquitous 20-volume set of the *Lisān*. Instead, the small passage gives excerpts of ten entries, each line setting out the core of a different meaning of the root and its derivations. The ten meanings of l-h-w, according to the quoted passage, are: love (*ḥubb*), distraction (*ghafal*), complete attachment (*lā yufariquh*), or a gift (*'atiyya*). And indeed, these attributes do very much define the idea of the nation as 'comedy' in the series. Palestine in the works is precisely something that is

loved, an idea that distracts from or occludes other on-going processes and events, a thing from which characters cannot be separated yet are separate. Then at the same time as all this, it is also a gift, to be given and offered, something somehow material that encapsulates in one form all of these other elements.

While these –as analysis of the novels in the series will show—are uniquely and precisely the attributes of Palestine (as indeed the idafa complex indicates in the series title) that the *milha* writes, the definitions in the backmatter are not all of the definitions of the word root given in the *Lisān*.[61] The dictionary includes, in addition to those above: to stray from the path of god, to be lead into sexual temptation, the divine, and to grind, or mash up.[62] Not only is the backmatter reference incomplete, then, —with no indication given in the text as to how or why some definitions are included and others are not—but it is also to a great extent re-constituted. Sentences presented as whole in the entry are at times cobbled together from the parts of two or three sentences in the compendium. For example, one line of the entry, which examines the concept of love, makes use of *l-h-w* in its meaning as distraction. This has the effect of re-defining, or re-interpreting limits of the root and its possible meanings.

Making reference to the *Lisān*—which compiles religious, juridical, poetic, and historical usage—the passage is not simply re-defining or re-arranging the meaning of *l-h-w*. As one of the most comprehensive Arabic lexicons, the *Lisān* has become an authoritative source, something that codifies not only language but also the concept of an Arab linguistic and cultural heritage. Re-interpreting the text, then, is re-figuring for a contemporary reader a literary past and the very possibilities of meaning in language. If this is what the excerpted passage does for *l-h-w* and the concept of the *comedy* (*al-Malhāt*), it is also what the novels of *al-Malhāt* do for the concept of Palestine, *al-filasṭīnīyya*. If the definition can be broken down into parts, the re-interpreted entry suggests, and each part understood at once separately and as part of a collective meaning of the root word and its derivations, than this is also the frame within which each of the novels of the series might also be read. It seems of little coincidence, then, that the *Lisān* passage first appeared in the works of *al-Malhāt* when they came out as a series; the two novels which had been published previously as independent works (*Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar* and *Mujarrad 2 faqaṭ*) had no such entry until they each were incorporated into the comedies project. In the same way that the *Lisān* passage

links the definitions of *l-h-w* to create the 'whole' meaning of the word, the passage's addendum to *al-Malhāt* joins the books together into the creation of a whole imagination of Palestine; and importantly, an imagination that both recognizes and makes use of the conventions of imagination.

There is a similar process at work in *Shurfat al-ʿār* (Balcony of Disgrace) (2009), the third volume in the *Shurafāt*, and the point in the Palestine project at which the inextricable link between the two series formed. *Al-ʿār* is the story of the death of a young woman, Manār, at the hands of a confluence of structures, which –though they each claim to act as her protector—ultimately cause her demise. The novel builds on and develops a number of themes that had emerged in *al-Malhāt;* the most striking of these is its use of the *Lisān*.

In the middle of the first section of the novel, its protagonist Manār walks onto campus where her father has dropped her off for her first day of university. Before going to her classes, however, she ducks into the library to look up a word in the *Lisān*. It is not *l-h-w* that Manār looks up—this is no longer the world of the nation, after all—but *sh-q-q*, searching for the meaning of *shaqīq* [brother]. When she finds the entry, she reads a long list of the word's meanings into the novel. Though lengthy, the list—like the entry for *l-h-w* in the back matter of *al-Malhāt*—is not exhaustive. More than just omitting at least five of the six pages of the entry from Ibn Manẓur's compendium, however, what Manār reads into the novel re-orders the definitions set out by Ibn Manẓur. This re-ordering of information ends up creating a narrative out of the entry, a narrative of fragments that parallels Manār's own tragic story. The trajectory of the young woman's life thus seems pre-determined by the historic text. The passage that Manār reads out is quoted in full below, with notes at left marking out how the different sections of the excerpt mirror the structure of the story being told in *al-ʿĀr*.

Place in the family	*And it said: He is my brother, a piece (shiqqun) of myself, and so he is part (shaqīqun) of me, the plural of sibling (al-shaqīq) is siblings (ʾāshshiqāʾ), and this part (shaqīq) of me, as if it were cleft (īnshaqqa) into two halves, each one of them part (shaqīq) of the other, all of them brothers. And ʿAbū Zubīd Al-ṭāʾī said:*
Relationship with brother	*Oh son of my mother, oh part (shaqīq) of myself*
	You are from inside me, inescapably

And he said: Women are the siblings (shaqāʾiq) of men, their isotopes, their equals in morality, an imprint, is as though the sisters (shuqiqna) are pieces of them. And the clouds (shaqāʾiq), split followed by inundating rain. And al-Hudhalī said:

And so I said to her, what is comforting like a garden

Is softened in growing, becoming good so she that is cleft (shaqāʾiq)

Ominous warning, fertility

And shaqīqa means: a wide rain, because the darkness is split [īnshaqqa] from it. The Shaqāʾiq Nuʿmān [Anemone] is a plant whose singular is shaqīqa, called by that name for its redness, like a bolt of lightning [shaqīqat al-barq]. And it is said that it is named thus also for Nuʿmān (Nuʿmān b. al-Mundhir) because he fell on a cleft [shaqāʾiq] of sand in which those red off-shoots had grown. The flower [because he died there] was praised and protected, and it is said that Nuʿmān is the name of blood! And the Anemone [al-shaqīqa] is named for its pieces, they are pieces of him, so its redness became the red of blood. So his Anemone [shaqāʾiq-hu] is a piece of him, which looks like its redness, the redness of blood. And though this flower is named the Anemone [shaqāʾiq] of Nuʿmān, the name Anemone [shaqāʾiq] dominated; the flower [al-shaqīqa] appearing in the grass is the Anemone [al-shaqīqa]. And Abū Ḥanīfa said: Through any coarse earth the Anemone [al-shaqīqa] soars.[63]

Violence, war, double meanings

Rebirth of symbols

The re-arranged entry describes Manār's young life, her celebration within the family, the tension between her and her brothers, and then shifts to an ominous rain. This represents the dark turn in events in the novel. Raped, refused an abortion, imprisoned by the state for her own safety, she is eventually shot in the street by her brother (*shaqīq*) at the command of a paternal uncle. The death of Nuʿmān in the re-narrated passage—as well as the story of the anemone—signifies her own death in the novel. The coarse earth is the paradox within which both Manār and Palestine exist (See Chapter 7 part three for a reading of Manār as the Gaza Strip during the 2008-9 bombardment), and which the novels of both series are trying to undo. The final lines of the re-arranged lexicographical entry, "Through any course earth, the anemone soars," is—when compared to the original—perhaps the most 'out of place.' In re-narrating an old and codified tradition, indeed in re-telling and re-think now a narrative is constructed by undoing that which has been codified, a possibility for success is written into the story. This extends even the story of Manār, whose own life is ended by her brother.

In paralleling the story of Manār to the re-arrangement of the *Lisān* passage, the novel is making a commentary on the question of Arab tradition, its process of compilation, codification, and implementation. This is put in conversation with the same process that has been so central to the question of the Palestinian nation: the codification of the nation-state as the dominant structure repeated in the exercise of power through multiple systems. If the text made room for a reading of Manār through the structure of the excerpt, her story would not be so closed, and room could be found within the structures that end her life to ensure her survival. The problem, once again, is the modularization of a once-diverse concept, and its codification through the assumed authority of the past, imposed through the structures of power that operate in her community. The definition builds on itself, showing how words, and even traditions, are shaped and expanded by combining multiple ideas and usages from across time and space. The entry even includes a lesson on codification: with its observation that, although the full name of the anemone is the 'Shaqāʾiq Nuʿmān,' "the name shaqāʾiq dominated," and the first part of the 'original' signifier was dropped. Here, even the dictionary works to remind a reader how usage shifts, and in so doing can re-shape tradition.

Underscoring this is what Manār omits from the passage. In addition to the explanation that shaqāʾiq forms part of the compound (now invisible) to define the Nuʿmān as a type of flower, the dictionary explains that Nuʿmān is also a Phoenician god, known in Greek as Adonis, a god of the summer season reborn each year.[64] The reference is not expanded on, but other sources reveal the background myth: when Nuʿmān died, he was transformed into the flower, which blooms in the early spring.[65] Nuʿmān, then, can signify either (or both) a figure of Greek mythology, or Arab history. By leaving one out, the meaning of history and the claims made of this historical compendium shift and change. Tradition is re-interpreted based on the information available. When new information is added, when the order of information changes, or when the information is used to tell a different sort of story, history too is changed.

The passage marks a moment of fascinating intersection between the *Shurafāt* and *al-Malhāt*, and in fact brings together some of the themes developed in both—indeed through the conversation that happens when the two are understood together. To begin with, the *sh-q-q* passage gives a prototype for the imagination of Palestine and all of its parts as

siblings; unique, each whole individuals who are connected, made of the same material despite different experiences and even conflict. This had already been somewhat developed in *A'rās āmina*, whose twin sisters are said to have been split (*inshaq)* "from the same foul bean" (For more on the question of siblings, especially twins, see Chapter 8). In *Taḥta shams,* paired protagonists explore the idea of a problematic collective as one takes over the other, expanding the idea of the relationship between parts, and how not only blood, but power networks link indelibly one individual to another. In both cases, one of the pair is killed, and the other tasked with carrying on their memory; incorporating in themselves more than one whole, so that which was split becomes many symbolized in the one.

To stretch the metaphor, *shaqīq* (and its root, *sh-q-q*), also hold within them the possibility of an invisible presence, in the doubled *qaf*, which appears in some formations but not in others. It is the basis of the idea of a Palestinian nation that can be traced in the Palestine project. The multiple meanings of *sh-q-q*, furthermore, do not end with the idea of the sibling; they also work in the concept of the resilient martyr as part and parcel of the idea of connection built by *shaqīq*. The symbol builds its meaning through multiple levels of association, and draws connections with other texts across these levels. This weave of associations allows Manār to be read as a martyr, shows the very idea of martyr to be a constructed one, and shows how she is connected indelibly to her siblings; so that they will carry her and what has happened with her indefinitely. This is inter-textual Palestine, to understand the links between these elements of the novels and their characters is to understand the links between events, geography, and individuals as part of a nation.

A second symbol developed within the *sh-q-q* passage even further links the series together. The anemone had already appeared as a symbol in three of *al-Malhāt* works before it was expanded on in *Shurfat al-ʿār*. Ḥanūn, the Palestinian colloquial word for the anemone, is the name of the slain beloved in the coming of age story *Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar,* the novel that began *al-Malhāt*. The infant girl was born in Palestine, and there betrothed to the boy who teaches birds caution. Ḥanūn is killed in the lead up to Black September, and signifies for the protagonist not only the loss of Palestine, but his eternal connection to love and to nation; in fact the two are killed together. In *Taḥta shams,* the adopted son of an aging *fidāʾī*–the novel's central character—shares the now invisible name of the anemone *Shaqāʾiq Nuʿmān*. The boy, Nuʿmān, is killed tragically amid the violence of the Second

Intifada. In *Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍā'*, an anemone grows in the open grave of village leader ʿAbū Khālid, signifying his narrow escape from death at the hands of the British and rebirth into political life. For the village elder, it signifies rebirth, but also a sign of things to come. He will eventually be killed in the fight to save his village. As a martyr, however, be becomes part of the story of Palestine; so that even when the village falls to the Zionist militias in 1948, the symbol of the anemone—the Greek symbol of re-birth, the Arab historical hero-fighter, and the flower stained with his blood that grows every spring—takes on yet another meaning. In all of its forms, across each of the novels, the symbol is built through a complexity of usage and development across the many spaces and times of Palestine.

The treatment of the *Lisān* passages, their alteration and adaptation at once proves the problem of the malleability of tradition, but at the same time suggests the imaginative possibilities of an open-text. The difference between the entries of the *Lisān* and the idea that emerges from these collected works is the notion of a continuing tradition, and an open text that adopts as part of the story, the structures that produced it. This, in a nutshell, is the inter-textual nation that is imagined by *al-Malhāt*. To understand the innovations, the connections, and the meaning produced by these intertextual devices, it is finally time to turn to the field of intertextuality, and explore the areas being developed, as well as areas of invention.

Intertextuality to inter-textuality

To fully 'read' passages like the *Lisān,* the phenomenon of intertextuality is entirely unavoidable. First, in its most basic terms, as Gerard Genette lays out, intertextuality describes and defines the "relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another."[66] But of course, the passage is not simply being used in the works "in its most explicit and literal form … [as] the traditional practice of quoting."[67] Indeed, the series' play with 13th century text hints at a larger game. A close reading of the types of intertextuality at work in fact necessitates a wider thinking around just what is being achieved through the usage.

At the very least, the *Lisān* passage could be described in Genette's encyclopaedic (and structural) outline of the uses and types of intertextuality as an instance of (at least):

hypertextuality, [68] classical intertextuality (what Genette later comes to call transtextuality),[69] transposition, [70] versification, [71] condensation,[72] amplification, [73] and the creation of the stuff of a series.[74] Indeed, the passage (respectively), conjures the *Lisān* by name, quotes its text, transforms that text, turns what was generally a prose work into a poetic stanza, shortens the original, amplifies its meaning, and in using it as one of the defining characteristics of the series, turns it into a paratext. From title to preface to footnote, the *Lisān* passage also acts as a "conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, [something that] constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction."[75]

To understand fully the significance of the passage, however, one must also reach out to Genette's concept of architextuality, as a way of thinking the different concepts or styles (genres) of a given text and the rules of discourse that govern it.[76] So for example in the *Lisān*, its original life as a compendium put together in the 13th century and its subsequent incarnation as the definitive resource for Arabic Language must both be taken into account in order to 'read' the prosefication (or condensation, or hypertextuality) of the inserted passage. To look to the frames within which the *Lisān* was written and the process by which the works of the series draw from it, it is to theories of Julia Kristeva, pioneer of the field of intertextuality, Roland Barthes, and Harold Bloom that one must (and shall shortly) turn.

However, while the presence of the *Lisān* passage and many other intertextual devices can be described and analysed through the works of these theorists, the overall purpose and effect of the accumulated instances of intertextuality seems to generate a distinct paradigm. So here, intertextuality will refer to the field in general (and at times to the works of specific thinkers, who will be identified as they are conjured). Inter-textuality, on the other hand, will be used to distinguish between the existing theories and described techniques of intertextuality and will refer to the specific technique being used to imagine a Palestinian community.

> **Inter-textuality** is a hyphenated term developed to describe the hybrid, multiple, and intimately connected locations and temporalities of the Palestinian nation as they are imagined in literary networks. As a hybrid, inter-textuality refers

collectively to the myriad ways of possible textual relationship, and is used to identify the ways these collected techniques are being used to create an imaginative space for the nation.

An example of how this works across an entire novel may prove useful. Using the three layers of Gerard Genette's structuralist approach, Julia Kristeva's concept of the 'literary utterance,' and Harold Bloom's notion of 'influence,' the following section will carry out a brief reading of *Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ* [Olives of the streets] (2002), the third work of *al-Malhāt*. This will serve first to lay out a vocabulary of intertextuality theory used here to unpack the basic elements of the techniques as they occur in the novels under consideration. At the same time, it will work to show how intertextuality as a theory of connection moves toward inter-textuality: a logic for the compiled imagination of narrative as well as form.

This is easily reflected in, *Zaytūn*, which even a very basic reading reveals a sophisticated use of frame stories, and array of devices that make use of diverse texts to tell the story of Salwā, the novel's heroine. Building up from intertextuality to inter-textuality, diverse intertextual devices must be catalogued and understood in order to interpret the narrative, and in order to recognize some of the forms that act on and must be read-in to the story. In fact, it is *only* through this process of inter-textual reading that the story of Salwā can be discerned. So, as the analysis below will show, each type of intertextuality is used for a broader purpose: to create a type of narrative (of imagining) that is inter-textual. It is only through this that the nation-state paradox is overcome, and by which a full and comprehensive Palestinian community can be imagined.

Beginning with a structural analysis, Figure 4 below maps the different intertexts that tell the story of *Zaytūn*. Those within the large rectangle are the 'texts' related within the timeframe of the novel, those outside are referenced within the novel but do not occur as it is read. While imperfect, each shape in the figure can be thought of as a 'text' (an imaginatively limited space with its own logic and self-developed parameters, along the lines of Barthes' definition)[77] with no correlation between size and importance, and the arrows the degree of conversation between them; or how much the reader's knowledge of one text might influence an understanding of the others. The overlapping sections suggest

how one text frames, or gives context to (adding another layer of conversation) the text that it underlies.

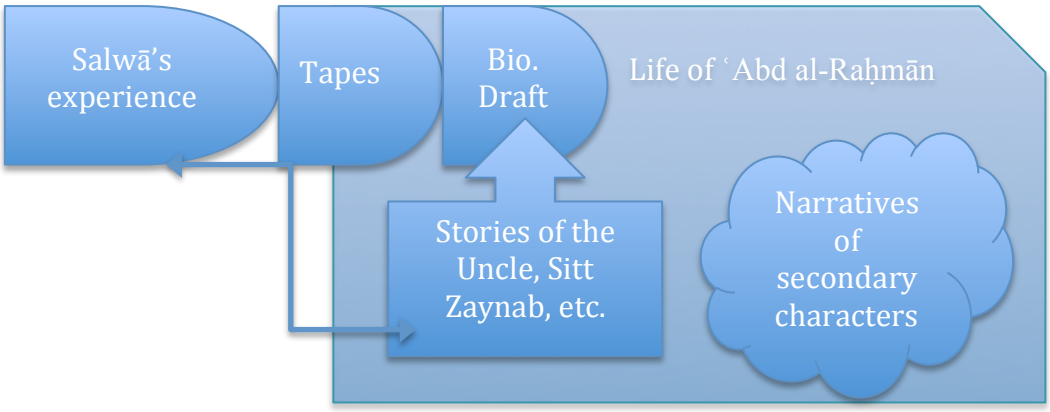

Figure 4: The shape and relationship of *Zaytūn*'s texts

Thus, in Genette's most basic structural terms, the plot of *Zaytūn* can be said to contain at least five 'types' of hypertext: First, the novel, the story of a Lebanese journalist, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, who tries to tell the story of Salwā, a Palestinian refugee living in one of the camps outside of Beirut. This is a classic frame story, and within it dozens of other texts occur. However, the text that never truly appears within the novel is the one that tells Salwā's experience of abuse, what she felt and how she lived after she was orphaned, and mistreated by her uncle to the horrific extent that he pimped her out to a camp official in return for political favours. Indeed, though ʿAbd al-Raḥmān tries to tell her story, the central tension of the novel is that he never does. Salwā's text thus hovers outside of the frame of the novel, throughout which it is transposed, condensed, and otherwise manipulated to ill effect. What do appear are "six cassette tapes, on which were the whole story, from its beginning, but not to its end" (8). These are the tangible record of one long interview between ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and Salwā, which are referenced within the novel but which we never hear directly. Also referenced, and just barely present in the novel is ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's draft biography. This, indeed, is what opens the story. After reading the draft Salwā marches into the journalist's office and throws the manuscript out of the window, declaring: "if I hadn't cast out these papers I would have died under them" (7).

This is because, in addition to Salwā's interviews, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān carries out a series of other interviews with different interloquers, including the young woman's uncle and other

members of her community who allowed the abuse to take place. In addition to these three 'types' is the newspaper article, which ʿAbd al-Raḥmān read. It was here that he first learned about Salwā, mentioned as one of a list of allegations attesting to a camp official's corruption. These already diverse texts are interspersed with a series of memories, told as if embedded and discrete stories within the novel. Each of these are hypertexts, which for Genette, act like a 'discrete' work, something that is "invested with a meaning that is autonomous and thus in some manner sufficient. But sufficient does not mean exhaustive."[78] So, the novel is a complete work, as is the referenced biography that the journalist authored, as are the interviews etc., each 'complete' stories that enter a wider telling.

At the same time, each of these hypertexts is seen, again in Genette's terms, to be representative of different architexts, a concept that works to delineate and define "the entire set of general or transcendent categories—types of discourses, nodes of enunciation, literary genres—from which emerges each singular text."[79] The idea is a way of exploring how different types of writing –different genres, like interview, news article, novel, biography, letter—participate in (and are the product of) different types of discourse.[80] The term 'architext' thus references the larger systems to which each example of a text belongs, as a way of understanding the code that governs any given text, and through which it can be read. This covers, for example, the conventions of a letter, or of a news article, so that the context of writing –that if it begins with 'Dear So-and-so,' or 'London— The Minister of Finance on Wednesday…'—informs how meaning is made within the text, and indeed how the words in the text are understood. Just as the "compendium" as a style of text must be understood in order to read the *Lisān* passage, so too does the newspaper article, in order to understand why it is that the corruption of a political leader would become a focus instead of the discovery of decades of rape and abuse. At the same time, it is the architext of the biography, in which the young woman's own story has been 'fact checked' and processed through the conventions of the genre, that spurs Salwā throw the manuscript out the window.

Eventually ʿAbd al-Raḥmān realizes that he will have to struggle to find a form that does justice to Salwā's experience. But he does not know how to write this type of story; he cannot make sense of the information that she gives him, seeing it within the known frames

as disjointed and at times nonsensical. What the writer wants is for the facts to 'line up.' His efforts to 'make sense' of the story are through the prism of biography (as an architext)—which in turn relies on the frame of history, and shadows the form of the nation state—where the course of a person's life sees one event lead to the next retrospectively.[81] Within this framework, the heavy body of the camp official Salwā suffers beneath becomes a chilling parallel for the conventions of narrative, as one reproduces the violence of the other. As Salwā confesses to ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, "I cried the whole night. When I read your pages I cried more than I had in my whole life" (5). Indeed, for the young woman, the violence of the genre –and the conventions that means her life is not told according to her own voice— is more destructive and more humiliating than the abuse that brought her to the writer's attention.

This reading calls for an extension of current intertextual theory—one of the first contributions to the field from inter-textuality as a method of writing community. This parallel between the structures and conventions that allow Salwā's abuse to take place and the violence of the narrative, asks that social structures also be understood as 'texts.' Eventually, the structure of the nation-state itself can be recognized as an architext, a 'mode of enunciation,' within which many stories (though not the Palestinian story) have been told. *Zaytūn*—and the frame story's quest to tell Salwā's story—asks both ʿAbd al-Raḥmān and the reader to understand the social structures that dictate her experience; the novel demands to be read inter-textually. Frustrated by the writer's inability to convey (or indeed understand) what she has gone through, Salwā explains that in order to tell her story:

> You must see with your own eyes how I woke nightly and found my legs tied to the edges of the bed, and my pyjamas open over my breasts and the words of my uncle ripping through me from behind the door:
> She's ready. (55)

What she means, is that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān cannot fit the story into an existing frame. Though he makes his best effort to "see with his own eyes," he is only able to seek out other established narratives. This is why he knows that asking her uncle for his narrative of events is problematic, asking "But why did you go to see her uncle? ʿAbd al-Raḥmān asked himself. To make sure her story was true this time" (36). What the reporter learns from her school principal and the uncle, however, do not corroborate the young woman's story, they simply state: "I've never seen a girl who loved boys and chasing them more than her," (55)

or her uncle, "We tied her up because she was crazy!" (55). Though he knows on some level that asking Salwā's uncle is a violation of her story, he goes because he does not know how to write otherwise. Learning this, the heroine laments, "It is impossible for someone to believe me if they use only their ears to listen to me, their eyes would bulge if they tried" (31-2). With only existing architexts through which to tell her story, there is no way to make 'sense' of her trauma.

Looking at the political and social 'frames' that exist invisibly in the structural layout of the novel's types of texts, it becomes clear that, as a young, single, orphaned, Palestinian refugee woman, Salwā's struggle for representation must pass through several structures of power before it can be told. First, it goes through her uncle, as the most immediate family member. He had killed her father under the fog of war in 1948, eager to get his hands on his brother's wife. When Salwā's mother kills herself out of despair, the uncle is left with the young girl, and pimps her out for political favours. The camp (PLO) official who is raping her, visits her home on the pretext of supporting the widows of martyrs, since Salwā's fiancé had been killed—publically by an Israeli bullet, though she believes it was her uncle who had committed the crime—and declared a martyr. Since the fiancé is claimed by the national cause, Salwā becomes his property, exploited through the national signifiers of the martyr that were developed to ensure her eventual freedom and return to Palestine. Though Salwā tells religious and secular authorities (her local imam and schoolteacher) neither have the power to call out violence being perpetrated under the cover of the national cause, which is in turn reinforced by gender and class structures.

Putting aside the point that it is a Lebanese man and not Salwā herself who writes her story, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's relatively earnest struggle to narrate what happened to Salwā—and Salwā's own insistence that he keeps getting it wrong—is the tension that opens the window on each of the power structures that shape Salwā's life. Moreover, the quest to write her story records into the novel not only Salwā's experience, but also the structures that have created it. In critiquing structures, not only are the mechanisms that do violence to the individual identified as problematic, but they are also set aside so that the actual life of Salwā can be told, and thus included within a Palestinian national experience. So, though the novel is about Salwā, her story is 'told' by so many problematic structural forces—national, familial, narrative—that the woman's personal experience of abuse is nearly

impossible to excavate. Each of these forces is portrayed as a 'text,' quite literally in some cases like the biography draft and the audiotapes, and in more abstract terms such as the camp social structure, and as later chapter swill explore, the concept of the national hero, patriarchal power structures, and even the frame of the nation. These 'texts' each form distinctive and bounded tellings of the young woman's experiences. The 'story' of Salwā, then, comes through the interaction of and relationships between several different frames, or 'texts,' as inter-textual.

Linking texts

Having identified each of the different types of 'texts' included in *Zaytūn*, we must turn back to intertextual theory for the start of models that allow for their integration. These models help to answer the question: what do we make of all these texts? Where is the story in the end? Roland Barthes' notion of intertextuality helps here. Less structural and more wide-reaching, Barthes thinks about intertextuality in terms of where one text begins and the other ends. For him, when texts interact, the meaning of the text does not 'reside' in the text itself, but in the interaction of language between one text and another.[82] Meaning is outside, or somehow in-between each text. Barthes' notion of textual relationship distinguishes between and at the same time provides an integrating model for the texts that are summoned into a novel (for example) through intertextual device, and the 'texts' that (like the social texts in *Zaytūn*) are revealed to be operating –dialogically, as Bakhtin would say—inside that novel. He describes this set of relationships thus: "The intertextual in which every text is held, itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text."[83] For Barthes, multiple texts make up a work (a novel, say), and each text draws on and from the notion that Barthes borrows from Kristeva; the 'literary utterance.'

For Kristeva, intertextuality is the existence of a literary ether, an atmosphere within which works are produced. This atmosphere is what Kristeva calls a literary "utterance."[84] For her, the utterance contains every text produced. It is from this that new works draw, and to which they are added once complete. This is reminiscent of Harold Bloom's notion of textual influence, where, writing of authors, he says, "the worlds they made *made* us"[85] (emphasis added). Being thus 'made' by the texts that constitute the literary utterance from which new texts draw, there is a necessary connection, an "influence," between texts of the

past and texts of the future. In understanding the whole "literary utterance" as national, the relationships between texts and the meaning that those relationships create also becomes national. So, if the novel represents a closed system (in terms of narrative, and also in terms of representing the closed system of the nation-state), or a "bounded text," the many different texts that represent nuanced and particular realities and locations of Palestine—understood in relationship—are able to transcend these limitations by imagining beyond them. From the assumptions "bounded" by the text through its process of discourse, to the process of bounding, inter-textuality makes use of the very conventions of the text to expand and re-wire the process of thinking the nation.

The very impetus for narrative –that which drives the story—forces a reader to consider not only the events that are being related, but who is telling them, and the form they are being expressed in. In *Zaytūn*, this begins with Salwā's insistence that the manuscript is: "a shelter for lies, not a refuge for me," and is hinted at when she calls the biography manuscript "a story from different perspectives," and accuses the journalist (rightly) that, "You want it to be *accurate*," reminding him that, "This is life, not a story; have your forgotten?" (5). To understand the story of the novel, each text must be discerned, its architext understood, and social texts added into the larger story being told. The context and dialogue between texts allows the reader to independently evaluate the veracity, problems, and meaning of each, so that the politics of narrative become as much of the story as the characters and their experiences. Reading the text as a 'literary utterance,' or as an intertextual space (Kristeva) where each text informs and produces the meaning of the other, all of a sudden the space between texts becomes visible, and Salwā's story can be discerned.

It is thus that, in the end, Salwā's logic is what dictates the narrative of *Zaytūn*. As what Genette would call a palimpsest,[86] each narrative writes over and occludes the young woman's 'original' story. In reading and re-reading each of these other texts, and in discerning the rules that make them, we are in the end taking the advice that Salwā's school teacher gives ʿAbd al-Raḥmān when he comes to her in despair, asking how it is possible to write the young woman's story:

> If you want to write well about Salwā, you must listen to the tapes once, twice, three times, until you feel that Salwā is no longer in the tapes, that she

> has escaped and become part of you; when you forget about the tapes, you must write Salwā as you feel her, and this is all you must do. (79)

It is only by releasing himself from the expectation of a narrative that fits into the dominant mould that the journalist can find a space for Salwā's non-linear, 'incomplete,' and 'unverified' telling of her own experience. As the journalist "touched with fear the six cassette tapes, on which were the whole story, from its beginning, but not to its end" (8), the reader becomes able to see all of the texts and all of their problems. No longer the linear biography, the journalistic interview, or the fact-checked article, Salwā's insistence on re-writing, on re-listening, and on hearing her tell her own story means these texts –instead of representing her—become representative of the very structures that silence her. To read all of these together, text and inter-text, is to read with Salwā's logic, and to allow the architexts to be part of the story, instead of the powers that dictate them.

Inter-textual nation

Intertextuality thus becomes inter-textuality, and on the level of each of the novels, as indeed on the level of the two series and the Palestine project as a whole. Intertextuality allows each of the novels in the Palestine project to remain whole and unique, representing each whole and unique Palestinian experience. As part of a wider series (with the series one of the many intertextual devices employed in imagining the nation), these individual experiences take on a wider meaning through their relationships. These relationships crisscross time and space, linking each work to all of its others, and thus each experience (and its geo temporal realities) to all other experiences. The relationships are not closed or limited. The meaning of any given novel—or Palestinian national experience—must be re-interpreted and understood in a new range of relationships with the addition of either new or already-present texts (like with the late addition of *Mujarrad* to the series). Each therefore creates simultaneous independence and access to meaning through relationship with any other text. None can be ignored, and none can dominate its counterparts. The internal value or meaning of one novel is not challenged or changed by the addition of another, but the sum total of the relationships between texts does change. Thus, a flexible and open relationship between works becomes possible, and even necessary, as interpretation shifts to accommodate new ideas and experiences.

The inter-textual novels that tell the story of the Palestinian community thus imagine the nation in literary form. This literary imaginary can be drawn out—just as Benedict Anderson did in his *Imagined Communities*—to be understood as a "precise analogue" of the Palestinian nation. Instead of one based on assumptions of bounded space and linear time, the inter-textual relationships developed between works creates the idea of an inter-textual nation. This national form is able to take in the realities of a colonized, occupied, fragmented, and dispersed modern Palestinian nation; a nation that has no boundaries, no finality, no linearity.

In the inter-textual nation, these fragments become texts, discrete and stand-alone imaginings of a Palestinian nation that can only be fully understood in relationship to a broader and inter-textual whole. The experience of the Nakba, the experience of exile, the experience of watching a new state take shape on the site of a nation; each of these occur spatially in multiple fragmented locations, and the events occur on their own disconnected timelines. If the imagination of a national community depends on a singular notion of historical time and limited geography, then writing *in relationship* offers a way to describe the multiplicity of the Palestinian nation, and to imagine it as a singular idea made of multiple parts and structures of power. Thus, while the nation-state has been codified, embedded within multiple structures dictating belonging within labour, financial, trade, migration, and legal frameworks, and remains "the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time,"[87] the notion of inter-textual nation provides an alternative. It at once works within the state framework of the nation, and national belonging, but also offers a chance to re-think the rules of the nation. As Bakhtin notes that "the birth and development of the novel as a genre takes place in the full light of the historical day […] and we cannot foresee all its plastic possibilities,"[88] so to might it be with the 'genre' of the nation-state as the political form of belonging.

What the tracing of inter-textual nation aims toward, then, is not only an exploration of the innovations, challenges, and alternatives to dominant systems of representation. It also suggests that the culmination of these innovations has produced a model of national belonging that responds to the realities of a contemporary national community. And while the realities of the contemporary Palestinian community are certainly exceptional for the degree to which it is not linear, sovereign, or bounded, a look at the representation of this

reality will certainly give form to the many contemporary experiences of both nationalism and other forms of community belonging elsewhere in the world. While innovated through Palestinian literature, the inter-textual nation makes room for a broader accounting of the structures that shape discourses of belonging. With these systems of representation undone, and structures of thinking accounted for, inter-textual also creates a location for the too-often-overlooked stories that make up the nation, but have so far been discounted from it. Within an alternative national paradigm, these minority, problematic, or simply marginal experiences can also become national. At the same time, inter-textual nation as it is developed through Naṣrallāh's Palestine project provides an opportunity to interrogate now-familiar Palestinian discourses on the nation, or re-read as inter-textual works that had reached the end of their national utility. From the trope of the fighter, to the idea of the writer as national hero, or the gender roles seemingly embedded in the symbols of the national cause, inter-textuality is able to question—without dismissing—the complex parts (and pasts) of a complex nation.

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[1] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991, 14.
[2] Homi Bhabha, "Introduction" in *Nation and Narration*. London: Routledge, 1990, 1.
[3] Samira Aghacy, *Masculine Identity in the Fiction of the Arab East Since 1967*. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2009, xiv.
[4] Wen-chin Ouyang, *Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel: Nation-state, Modernity and Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, 78.
[5] Julie Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*. Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005, 16.
[6] Peteet, *Landscape*, 102.
[7] Helga Tawil-Souri, "Uneven Borders, Coloured (im)mobilities: Id Cards in Palestine/Israel." *Geopolitics*. 17.1, 2012, 160.
[8] Peteet, *Landscape of Hope and Despair*, 126.
[9] Al-Barghūthī, Ḥusayn. *Al-Ḍufah al-thālthah li-nahar al-'Urdun*. Rāmāllāh: Baīt al-Sh'ar al-Filisṭīn, 1984; and Ḥabībī, Imīl. *Waqā 'Ī al-gharībah fī ikhtifā Sa'īd Abī al-naḥs al-mustashā 'il*. Baīrūt: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, 1974.
[10] See chapters two and four of Nora E. H. Parr, "The Construction of Palestinian Identities in the Arabic-Palestinian Novel" (MA Thesis, McGill University, 2007).
[11] Mohammed Saber Obaid and Sawsan Albayat. *al-Kawn al-ruwāʾī*. Beirut: al-Muʾassasat al-ʿArabīya li al-Dirāsāt wa ʿan Nashr, 2006, 16.
[12]For a long time Elias Khoury's *Gate of The Sun* was considered Palestine's epic novel, though the author is of course Lebanese, and calls remained (in particular by non-Arabic speaking critics) for a work by a Palestinian author to fulfill the gap in the national canon. (See, for example: Kamran Rastegar, *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015, 96; Ilan Pappé "Post-Zionism and its Popular Culture," in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture* [Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg Eds]. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005, 83.) From its first reviews, Naṣrallāh's *Zaman al-khuyūl al-*

bayḍāʾ was labeled a national epic (see for example: Aml Ṣaqr, "*Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍāʾ:* nisaāʾ Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh raʾ͡aʿāt" in *al-Ghad*, 19 April, 2010.).

[13] Ghassān Kanafānī, *Adab al-muqāwama fī filaṣtīn al-muḥtalla, 1948-1966*. Dār al-Ādāb: Beirut, 1966, 12.

[14] Kanafānī, *Adab al-muqāwama,* 4.

[15] Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature*. New York: Methuen, 1987, 7.

[16] Michael J. Shapiro, "National Times and Other Times: Re-Thinking Citizenship." *Cultural Studies*, 14.1, 2000, 80.

[17] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 26.

[18] Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 2.

[19] Edward W Said and Jean Mohr, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986, 33.

[20] While a great number of works have examined the fact of a post-national age, looking at the diverse characters and characteristics of contemporary states and nations as opposed to nation-states (see, for example: Jürgen Habermas and Max Pensky, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2001) or with an interesting look at the Israeli context (see: Yoav Gelber, *Nation and History: Israeli Historiography and Identity between Zionism and Post-Zionism*. London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2011), and even with a cultural angle (see: Yael Munk, "From National Heroes to Postnational Witnesses: A reconstruction of Israeli Soldiers' Cinematic Narratives as Witnesses of History," in Harris, Rachel S, and Ranen Omer-Sherman. *Narratives of Dissent: War in Contemporary Israeli Arts and Culture*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012) the works all presume—in their critique—the model of a nation-state. They thus tend to look at a post-national period that emerges—often in an age of globalization—in the wake of the Westphalian model instead of imagining a nation that was never and could never be in the nation-state model. Moreover, while these discussions exist, there is not yet a post-national model that can be adopted by peoples or nations at will.

[21] Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky,* 20-1.

[22] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 12.

[23] Robert T. Tally, *Spatiality*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013, 25.

[24] Tally, *Spatiality*, 28.

[25] Tally, *Spatiality,* 31.

[26] Tally, *Spatiality*, 31.

[27] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 12.

[28] Tally, *Spatiality,* 33.

[29] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 26.

[30] Perhaps realizing his oversight, in the second edition of *Imagined Communities* Anderson added an entire chapter on the map, calling what is now 'standard political cartography' one of the elements of postcolonial nationalism's "grammar," that "profoundly shaped" the way emerging states imagined "the geography of [their] domain" (163-4). In this additional chapter, Anderson laid out the centrality of maps and of the borders they portray in the imagination of the nation-state. His explanation of the process (and indeed fact of) demarcation of the nation-state as a foundation of the "grammar" of nationalism fits precisely into Tally's explanation of "the way in which nations and populations were understood."

[31] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 3.

[32] All of these newest members attained official status once both government and borders had been established, via partition or separation. The recent accession of Palestine to the UN General Assembly falls into a separate category, as it was only symbolically granted 'non-member observer status.'

[33] Tawil-Souri, Helga, "Qalandia Checkpoint As Space and Nonplace," *Space and Culture*. 14.1, 2011, 5.

[34] Peteet, *Landscape*, 26.

[35] Peteet, *Landscape,* 5.
[36] *Statistical Atlas of Palestine*. Ramallah, Palestine: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009.
[37] UNRWA*, Statistics 2010*, 5.
[38] Guy Mannes-Abbott, Samar Martha, Jean Fisher, and Jananne Al-Ani, *In Ramallah, Running*. London, UK: Black Dog Publishers, 2012, 27.
[39] As Rashid Khalidi has shown in his 1997 work P*alestinian Identity*. See also Alexander Schölch *Palestine in Transformation* (1993).
[40] Said and Mohr, *Last Sky,* 33.
[41] Tawil-Souri, "Mapping Israel-Palestine," 60.
[42] Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002*,* 57.
[43] Mannes-Abbott, *et al*., *In Ramallah,* 32.
[44] M. M Bakhtin and Michael Holquist. "Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, 243.
[45] Bakhtin, "Forms of time," 258.
[46] Etienne Balibar, "The nation form" in *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. By Etienne Balibar and Immanuel M. Wallerstein, London: Verso, 1991, 86.
[47] Balibar, "The nation form," 86*,* emphasis added.
[48] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, 47.
[49] Bakhtin, "Forms of time," 250.
[50] Bakhtin, "Epic and the novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, 84.
[51] Said and Mohr, *Last Sky,* 33.
[52] Peteet, *Landscapes,* 20.
[53] Performed in the 70s, and 80s in the West Bank and Israel, revived in the 2010s (see Reuven Snir, *Palestinian theatre*; Erin B. Mee, "The Cultural Intifada"). The play is also referenced later in Nasrallah's *Shurfat al-Hadhayān* (2005), and is used as common political parlance to describe the Palestinian situation (see Turki, "To be a Palestinian;" or even Hanafi, "Framing Arab socio-political space").
[54]Gunther Anders, "Being without time: On Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*" in *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Martin Esslin [Ed], Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, 1965, 146.
[55] Bakhtin, "Forms of time," 250.
[56] Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, "History, Orality, Narrative: Writing the Palestinian Nakba," (Lecture given at SOAS, University of London, November 19, 2009).
[57] Obaid and Albayati, *al-Kawn al-ruwāʾī,* 16.
[58] With the recent and brief exception of a footnote in *Qanādīl*, when at the close the hero's adopted mother—left along on a battlefield where everyone else has been killed—is said to walk to the village of Hadieh, where an asterix reminds a reader that the village is the same one where events take place in *Zaman*, published seven years earlier.
[59] Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, personal interview, London, November 2012.
[60] International Crisis Group, "Curb your enthusiasm: Israel and Palestine after the UN," Middle East Report No. 112*,* International Crisis Group, Geneva, September 2011.
[61] See Appendix for full translation of the excerpt, as well as the full passage from which the excerpt is taken.
[62] M. M. Ibn Manẓūr, "shaqiq" entry in *Lisān al-'arab*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1955*,* 2300-2303.
[63] Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, *Shurfat al-ʿār*. Beirut*:* al-Muʾassasat al-'Arabīya lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 2009, 42. Thanks to Maha Abdul Megeed and Tareq Al-Ruba'i for the help in translation, and to Wen-chin Ouyang for drawing attention to a missed passage.
[64] Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, 2302

[65] See, W F Albright, "Islam and the Religions of the Ancient Orient," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. 60.3, 1940, 297, for a fascinating discussion of the heritage of the word, and its historiography.
[66] Genette, *Palimpsests,* 1.
[67] Genette, *Palimpsests,* 2.
[68] This comes in direct relationship to what Genette called the hypo-text, and identifies a 'source' text and its new iteration (the hypertext). Genette, *Palimpsests,* 5.
[69] Referring to basic inter-referencing like citation and quotation. Gérard Genette, *The Architext,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992, 82-5.
[70] For example, translations, rewritings, and literary adaptations, *Palimpsests,* 212-15
[71] Here, the compendium entry is turned into a peom. Genette, *Palimpsests*, 218.
[72] Reducing the pages-long entry into a short poem. Genette, *Palimpsests*, 237.
[73] Extending and expanding on the meaning of a hypotext. Genette, *Palimpsests,* 262.
[74] The practise of extending a work through the devise of the sequal, the prequel, or the series.Genette, *Palimpsests,* 202-12
[75] Genette, *Paratexts*. 2
[76] Genette, *The Architext*.
[77] See Barthes' disciussion in "From work to text," in *Image, Music, Text*, where the author engages in a discussion to define the work as "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash," as opposed to a text, which acts as a small sub-division of the work that is imaginatively self-contained but not delimited, 157.
[78] Genette, *Palimpsests*, 397.
[79] Genette, *Palimpsests,* 1.
[80] Genette, *Architext,* xx.
[81] Most famously, see: Fredric Jameson, "Third-world literature in the era of multinational capitalism" in *Social text* (1986); or for examples of national 'autobiographies,' see also: Françoise Lionnet, "A Politics of the 'We'?: Autobiography, Race, and Nation," in *American Literary History* 13.2 (2001): 376-392, or as an example, Beckey Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Exhibition of Britain, Representing Britain in the Post-War World*. Manchester University Press, 2003.
[82] Barthes, Roland. *Image, Music, Text*, 1977, 143 xx.
[83] Roland Barthes, "From work to text," in *Image, Music, Text*. [trans Stephen Heath] London: Fontana Press, 1977, 160.
[84] Julia Kristeva, "The bounded text," in *Desire in Language*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980, 36.
[85] Harold Bloom, *The Anatomy of Influence: Literature As a Way of Life*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011, 29.
[86] Genette, *Palimpsests*, 40.
[87] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 3.
[88] Bakhtin, "Epic and the Novel," 105.

Part II – New Narrative Possibilities

To think the nation inter-textually is to replace the basic necessity of 'homogeneous empty time' and its imagination of bordered space and linear 'history,' with an understanding of community as something connected through a diverse network of relationships conjured within and between discrete 'texts' of the nation to form a larger conceptual whole. Two particular innovations stand out as the foundations of an inter-textual nation; the sort of imaginary building blocks that replace bounded space and linear time. In Naṣrallāh's work, the first emerges from the pair of novels that initiated the Palestine project in general, and *al-Malhāt* in particular: *Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar* [Birds of Caution] (1996), and *Ṭifl al-mimḥa* [Eraser Child] (2000). From writing style to plot, literary device to uniting themes, as a pair—and as the beginning of the series—these two works re-map the linked concepts of space, time, and narratives of belonging. Reading the two in comparative terms quite literally creates space for the re-conception of Palestinian national identity and experience beyond the requirement for sovereign space or a limited geography.

Once these foundational assumptions of national narrative are broken open, all of the structures –the "discrete historical forces"[1]—that had, as Anderson described it, become "modular" within the frame of the nation, must once more be accounted for. Thus, the second key component of the inter-textual nation is to find a way to integrate and make sense of the structures of power that operate within and between the sites and times of the nation. Using a variety of 'metatextual' devices, each an example of what Genette would classify as 'transtextuality,' the novels of the Palestine project create parallels between the relationship between text/event and power/story. In this way, how a reader understands that the genre of a text influences the type and kind of story that will be told also opens up the concept of structures of power—Anderson defined them as dynastic and religious, for example—so that structures like patriarchy, religion, and 'tradition' can be understood as 'texts' that enforce a way of telling on a social community. Thus, both literary and social structures that impose conventions over space, place, or individuals are treated as inter-texts. As texts, structures of power are engaged and subsumed by the inter-textual nation. So, that which once dictated the limits of possible narrative becomes only one of many parts of the story.

Chapter 3 – Linking space(s) without sovereignty

Before *al-Malhāt* was born as a series its anchoring novel *Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar* [Birds of Caution] (1996) broke through the impossible paradox of the imagined location of the nation. Published on its own, without reference to *al-Malhāt* or the idea of a larger project, *Ṭuyūr* was an initial attempt at writing the Palestinian epic. Naṣrallāh had been preparing to write that epic, carrying out years of historical research starting in the 1980s.[2] It was not a historical or wide-reaching novel that came out of the research, however. Instead, *Ṭuyūr* is Naṣrallāh's semi-autobiographical account of a young boy who comes of age between refugee camps outside of Bethlehem and Amman. Told from the perspective of a child (the narrator begins the novel as a foetus in his mother's womb), the spatial and political geography of the camps are for a long time meaningless to the protagonist; who is after all just learning to see and hear and move. Instead, the space of Palestine is knit through association and imagination, alongside a slowly widening sphere of experience.

Spiral cartographies

Born in a West Bank refugee camp a few years after the Nakba and killed on the outskirts of Amman shortly after 1967, the life and death of *Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar*'s protagonist are shaped by the spaces and events of Palestinian politics. In the background of a coming of age story, the novel subtly details the failure of the Arab Liberation Army (ALA) to save Palestine, the experience of families fleeing war, realities of life in a refugee tent, the development of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and discrimination of a refugee in a 'host' country. At the same time, *Ṭuyūr* writes into the Palestinian story the less-explored but no less influential factors that shaped its national experience as the 'catastrophe' continued in the wake of 1948. However, these major currents of Palestinian history and politics—though they form the very framework of the novel—are almost totally subsumed within the story of its' protagonist's coming of age.

Known only as *al-ṣaghīr* (the child, masculine), the story is told from his perspective beginning with his time in the womb. Thus, critical events are told according to the worldview of a growing foetus, then infant, toddler and child. Instead of 'historical' landmarks signposting the story, it is *al-ṣaghīr*'s birth, childhood friendships, erections,

love affairs, and hobbies that create the logic of *Ṭuyūr*'s narrative. The novel is a bildungsroman, but not the classical form where meaning is produced when "the everyday and biological sequences are fused into unitary markers of the epoch."[3] The regular patterns of history and geography become distorted; their logics re-invented by the eyes of a child learning to make sense of the world around him. Political repression, for example, is readable only through the arrest of *al-ṣaghīr*'s father amid what shadowy clues indicate is the lead-up to Black September. Instead of the usual summary of events, however, the quashing of the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordan is narrated only through the sorrow of the young protagonist, and its ramifications on schoolboy politics. Equally, the rise of aid organizations is not detailed through international politics or numbers of those served, but is rather perceived through the time spent in line waiting for food rations.

Meaning in *Ṭuyūr* is developed not through a defined space along a linear time, but through disparate connections between past and present that come as *al-ṣaghīr*'s worldview expands, his political consciousness matures, and as learning pieces events of his early days together with events as a youth. The resulting narrative forges a flexible web of meaning wherein locations, individuals, political movements and their changing time-spaces can and must be related in multiple and expanding ways. Bethlehem, for example–the town nearest to where *al-ṣaghīr*'s family settles in the wake of the Nakba—becomes constructed out of multiple moments: under the British Mandate, Jordanian rule, and Israeli occupation, a composite of parts that enter the story through experience, re-narrated memories, and flashbacks.

One brief set of examples will set the stage, and demonstrate the highly relational and organic way that meaning is made. Outside the relationship between his mother and his father, the first thing the infant protagonist comes to understand in the world is the existence of the *qaṭaʿ zirqāʾ* [the blue swath], or in 'standard' terms: the sky. The sky gets its name because *al-ṣaghīr* can see its vibrant colour only through a small widow set above his crib. He later realizes that the blue swath only becomes blue when *umm al-ḍawʾ* (23) [mother of the light, or, source of the light] appears. This of course, is the sun. *Al-ṣaghīr*'s near scientific enquiries into the nature of the world around him are stymied when his cot is moved to the other side of the room. The boy cries, but no one seems to notice, or know why. After a neighbour instructs his mother to put him back in the cot beneath the window,

so he can "see the face of his god" (14-15), *al-ṣaghīr* is convinced that the sun is a god who makes the blue cloth above the cot vibrant. He thus discovers the world using basic concepts and extrapolates meaning based on what he observes. The developing reality—which is very much portrayed as developing—is forged out of chance and dependent observations, which link beauty to sunlight and then to god; it is a new 'process' of making meaning. It is much later, when his mother takes him outside, that he "learned that the blue patch was so much bigger than I had imagined" (25); and so it is that the novel's protagonist comes to know the sky, and the sun, and about the transition from day to night. These associations also form the basis of how he reads the rest of the world, and thus how the story of his life unfolds for the reader. As the narrative proceeds, then, a reader must construct the logic of the boy in order to understand basic concepts, and ends up forging new links between objects and ideas.

While re-learning the meaning of the sun from the novel's protagonist, some more standard 'facts' can be gleaned by the reader from the voices of his parents and neighbours as they speak around him. Meaningless to an infant, is that he sleeps in a small cot near the window of a makeshift home on the outskirts of the newly established Dhueisheh refugee camp not far from Bethlehem.[4] The politics that can be read-in—that he is a refugee living in the West Bank of Jordan in the immediate wake of the Nakba—are words and concepts that have no value for the child; they only gain narrative traction for a world of adults. These 'facts' remain unconnected to the life of *al-ṣaghīr*, which continues to drive the narrative. As *al-ṣaghīr* admits retrospectively, "I didn't really know what the passage of time meant" (10), and without space or time as ordering principles, the state frame of the nation—which depends on a particular construction of space and time—cannot hold sway.

Take, for example, his first experience with distance. The infant narrator's first observations are confusions over perspective and the relationship between distance and size. In the weeks after *al-ṣaghīr* is born, he "remembered the people who visited them [the family], some had been big, some had been small, and maybe some of them had come from very faraway places" (23). The way that the infant associates the ideas becomes clearer a few pages later, when he explains about the world outside of the womb, "there are faraway houses, but they are small" (25). He means the houses across the valley from his own cave-home, homes that appear small to him, and cause him to wonder whether they are built that

way because those who live in them are small, or "perhaps they build them small like that only to sleep outside of them?" (23). The boy reads his own love for the outdoors (and the blue swath, which since his mother took him outside he realized was "so much bigger than I thought" (23)) onto the people who live across the valley, and also uses his own limited frame of big-small to understand the relationship between people who are near and those who are far. There are big people and small people, there is far and near; but since far things are small, the boy concludes that small people must be from faraway places. With each of *al-ṣaghīr*'s observations, a reader is brought further into his own curious and developing worldview, and though we know that the inhabitants of the valley are simply far away and appear small *in relationship* to the boy, we also know that the boy does not understand this relationship, and reads events with the limited information he has. The more we get to know the boy, the more his own logic makes sense, and the easier it becomes to read the world according to his own development without relying on a reader's own overriding interpretation.

In order to understand what he perceives and the insights that come with it, a reader must suspend dominant logics of space and time, and give over to the meanings that are created through the development of the child. While the opening of the novel and its captivatingly simple dialogue between an infant and his mother cue a reader into the new logic that will be set forth, a few other tactics are used to indicate new logical pathways. Chapters of *Ṭuyūr*, for example, are numbered sequentially 'backward,' starting at 46 and ending at 1 (with page numbers starting at 1 and ending at 332). These chapters are bookended with sections titled *shahāda* [witness/testimony], at once affirming theologically (or perhaps nationally) the soundness of the chapters between, and testifying to their accuracy. The two *shahāda* chapters narrate the precise moments of birth and death of the boy, beginning with the hands of the midwife reaching into the womb to extract *al-ṣaghīr* and bring him across the threshold into the world, and ending as the boy transforms into a bird of "a kind they had never seen before," (321) leaving behind on the earth just his old sweater and ascending into the sky. The chapters literally 'witness' his birth and death, the points in a life cycle when the *shahāda* (the testament of faith, and proclamation that 'there is not god but god') would be recited. The chapters' further mark out the boy as a witness, someone who can himself testify to that which he has lived; that which was seen between birth and death. He becomes a national narrator, endowed with the ability and the privilege of

witness, and of expressing wonder at everything from the fantastical to the ridiculous. The two chapters of witness also bring the total number of chapters in the novel to the symbolic 48, pegging the story of the boy to the story of the modern Palestinian experience. The life and story of *al-ṣaghīr*, then, is a testimony, and one that is linked to the idea of the nation through the symbol of the martyr, which in Palestine's modern period has become a distinctly national one.[5] His death can be claimed as a national signifier. This means that his life must now be claimed as national, inscribing his worldview and the process by which it was produced into a national imaginary.

The issue of naming is another example. Neither *al-ṣaghīr* nor most of the locations he inhabits are formally named. Occasionally proper nouns come in from secondary characters who happen to mention them, but for the boy—to whom names mean little, indeed he does not have one of his own—they do not factor into how he gets to know or understand people or places. Instead, everything is identified and related to one another through experience. The refusal to name the protagonist or many of his locations is perhaps the final cue to the re-orientation that the novel enforces. With no 'proper name' *al-ṣaghīr* has no lineage. His parents are, unusually, called by their first names, or as simply "mother" or "father," and never as "Abu *al-ṣaghīr,*" or a compound that might otherwise traditionally require the name of the boy. Instead, the relationship between him and his parents as well as extended family is built through his own perception of and interaction with them. The same goes for the boy's experience of space. The name of the camp where the boy is born, for example, is never named. Discerning location is only possible through references to nearby cities or hills. Since his grandmother goes into Bethlehem to buy stockings for a wedding, and the camp is located on a hill somewhat outside of town, it is almost certainly Dhueisheh.[6]

The relationships between spaces in the boy's life are constructed entirely through experience and a very literal interpretation of narrated pasts. What the first camp near Bethlehem 'is,' then, is the sum total of what happens to the boy inside of it, linked to other locations through snippets of memory that he overhears from his parents and relatives. Wiḥdāt, the camp where the boy moves with his family, is mentioned twice, the first as a location to where Ḥanūn, his childhood friend and betrothed, and her family have gone after her father is killed in what seems to have been a border skirmish of the type common between 1948 and the mid-1950s (again, the reasons for this must be unearthed, and are

never explained). Of concern to the boy, however, is that Ḥanūn is leaving to some other place unknown to him. For *al-ṣaghīr* it does not matter that they are in a camp, and that it is on one side of the Jordan River, and Ḥanūn is going to the other side. It also does not matter that New Camp, as Wiḥdāt was first known, was built specifically to relocate refugees inland and away from the tense border area.[7] For the boy, her relocation is a painful and lonely experience, he asks his mother:

> Is it because I made her mad that she left?
> No, they just went to Wiḥdāt to get someone
> And will we go too?
> When our turn comes. (61)

The actual journey of the boy to the new camp is not recorded, does not form part of his own narrative of experience. Instead, the first mention—following what could have been either months or years in Dhueisheh where he learns to talk, and hunt birds—of Wiḥdāt comes chapters later. It is not the location, the route travelled to reach the new camp, or the political realities that drove the boy's family across the river that are relevant, however. For *al-ṣaghīr*, it is the tent itself, its distance from Ḥanūn's tent, and the mud the lies in between that make up the narrative.

Political events also go un-named. The only real allusion to the Nakba–surprising for a story about a refugee that would begin *al-Malhāt*—is vague, mentioning only relatives' exodus "from their villages to Gaza … to Hebron … to where they were now" (28). The physical journey of refugees, so often depicted as one going 'outside' of a Palestine that automatically becomes the lost 'inside,' is stymied in a narrative where the actual location of much of the boy's life is unclear. The same goes for the arrest of the boy's father in the lead-up to Black September. Without any apparent warning or prelude, the boy returns home one day to find his father missing. "In prison? Where? The boy said. [His aunt] Maryam whispered: lower your voice, the walls have ears" (174). Confused—not only by the loss of his father but at the reaction of his aunt—the boy tries to discern what is going on as she talks to his mother. At the end of the day, he concludes that while "he didn't understand, he felt" (174) the consequences of the arrest. With so few political or geographic landmarks, mapping the shifting events of the story proves an insurmountable challenge, and a reader must defer to the logic of the boy and his own associations to make meaning out of and—in particular—between events.

Much of the boy's experience and his own interpretation of events come off as absurd. Uncouched from the framework of dominant narratives of Palestinian politics or history, the logical reactions of the boy based on his own experience come to create new relationships between the elements of his world and the story of Palestinian dispossession. So when later the boy takes a hammer to the walls of the home screaming, "Where are the ears?" his sobs of "I want my father right now!" (175) are immediately and logically linked to the invisible ears of the government that was cracking down on a Palestinian resistance. This is how the boy creates for the reader his own logic. Unable to make 'sense' of the political situation that leads to his father's arrest—if indeed there was sense to be made—the boy conjures his own links between places and events. With no firm footholds in the novel available within which to situate the prevailing narrative of events and their logics, it is to the narrative being constructed by the young protagonist that readers must succumb. This logic creates a way to probe the dominant narrative, and the links it makes between cause and effect or one location and another. By refusing to follow or even reference already-existing logics and linkages *al-ṣaghīr*'s narrative creates a way to tell that is particular to his own experience. Since that experience has already been declared as a national testimony, and a witness to the Palestinian past, just how his life and the lives of his friends and family are narrated—how their locations and actions take on meaning—is of a foundational importance.

The story of Maryam and Sulaymān

To map the narrative structure of *Ṭuyūr* is to follow the spiral-shaped story of *al-ṣaghīr* as it twists and turns through his different stages of life. It is not quite Lenin's spiral model of history, however, with its idea of progression and regression toward an identified goal.[8] Instead, the whirling trajectory of *al-ṣaghīr* produces a sort of spider's web of intersectional meaning, proceeding at once through and across time in order to tell not one, but many overlapping tales. These parallel narratives develop through events that transpire outside of the direct experience of *al-ṣaghīr*. Though they often seem inconsequential at first, the looping narrative spiral returns, so that they later take on loaded meaning, only to recede once more into the novel's sub-text and emerge as essential bits of information yet later in the life of the boy. It is often the climax of a seemingly unrelated event that forces its way into the life of *al-ṣaghīr*, and through slow narrative spirals other episodes in the same 'storyline' slowly become clear. These events, which are very often of large political

or historical significance to the typical Palestinian narrative, "are juxtaposed independently of the progress of the narrative; and the full significance of the scene is given only by the reflexive relations among the units of meaning."[9]

This way of creating textual relationship is what Joseph Frank, quoted above, calls the Spatial Form, where "all the factual background—so conveniently summarized for the reader in an ordinary novel—must be reconstructed from fragments, sometimes hundreds of pages apart, scattered through the book."[10] Its use in *Ṭuyūr* is a bit more elaborate. It builds on the basic structure of infant logic that the boy's coming of age creates, so that the experiences of others are no more 'straightforward' than his own. Instead, narrative images are crafted through a painting of a 'picture,' which eventually sets out the 'scene' within which the boy operates. What become more important in narrating his life are the relationships between the parts of the picture. So, where a linear narrative might have ignored the significance of the stories taking place next to and alongside the boy, written using the spatial form, these parallel relationships become pivotal to understanding the novel as a whole. Mapped, the narrative looks something like:

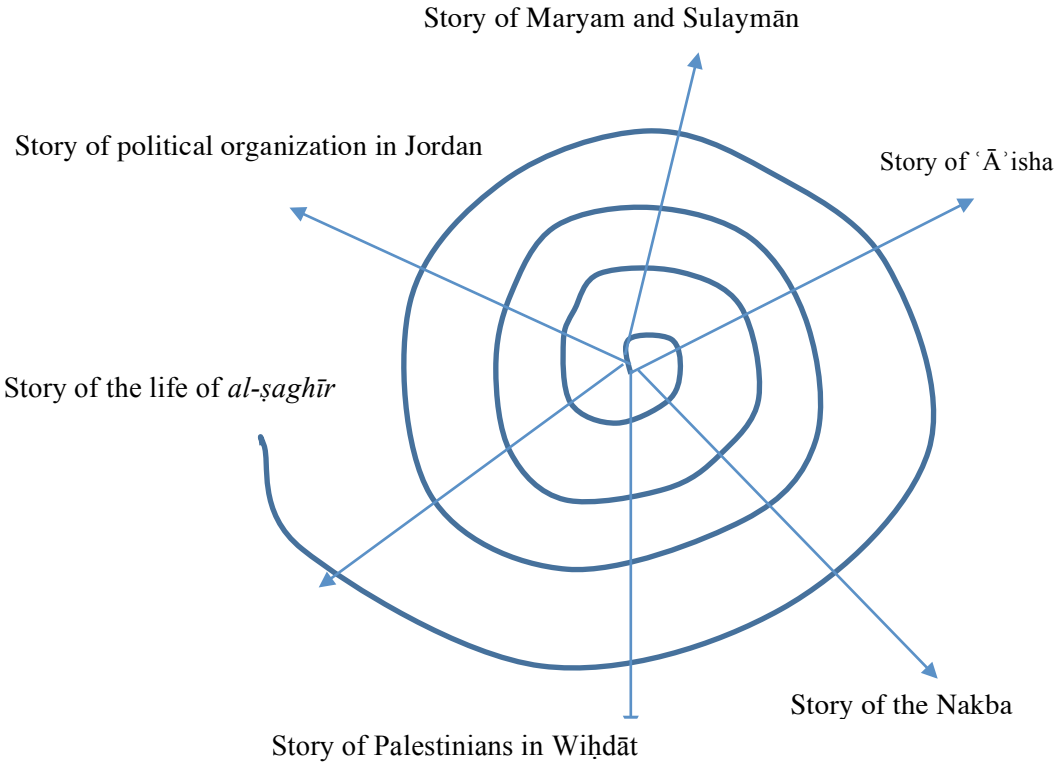


Figure 5: Spiral narrative trajectory and intersecting plot lines

So, the boy will have an experience, perhaps he will walk through a field and observe the buildings surrounding it, or overhear a conversation, or be upset by an encounter at his eventual work at the fruit market. The event as it is processed by the boy tells us only really what he is feeling and its role in his own development. It will be only much later in his life, or further along the pages of the book (which uses frequent flashbacks), that the descriptions accompanying his experience take on a wider narrative meaning; from the rapid growth of Amman post-1948, to the growth of a Palestinian resistance movement, to the worsening relationships between refugees and nationals in Jordan. Multiple linear narratives are produced as a consequence of the boy's perceptivity, so while his own life continues to include and make mention of a wider community, the narrative's spirals produce wider-reaching links to a whole community. The boy's life touches on questions of politics, or events in other people's lives only every once in a while. That these become woven into secondary narratives that are in fact part of the essence of the 'picture' being painted by the text pulls the narrative into a distinctive shape. A sort of spiral emerges where the whorl is the trajectory of the narrative and each leg of the axes it rests on (with perhaps infinite possible axes) represent intersecting and developed storylines. On one of these spokes is the story of his aunt Maryam, and her would-be lover Sulaymān.

The character of Maryam is first introduced in the novel when the boy hears his father say her name. The reference comes amidst a conversation between his mother (ʿĀ̄isha) and father (ʿAlī), where the two reminisce about the day they had met. ʿAlī had come with his family to the tent of ʿĀ̄isha's family, where they hoped to secure her eldest sister's hand in marriage. "Imagine if you hadn't appeared that night, if your sister had accepted, the boy would have been your sister's" (27), ʿAlī tells his now wife. The two continue to recall the event: With guests ensconced, ready to meet "Maryam the fair" (28), to everyone's surprise the young woman refuses to serve the men tea—a sign that she also refuses the idea of a marriage. She insists, "I will marry there, I will not marry here" (28), citing as her reason for refusal their continued displacement. She can marry only "there," in her home village north of Bethlehem, which her family fled during the Nakba. But, this is only mentioned in passing, as is the fact the reason Maryam gave "wasn't her whole story. That fair young woman had fallen in love with an officer from the Arab Liberation Army" (29). The memory, since it is principally about how the boy's parents met, forgets Maryam and goes

back to the problem of who will serve the guests tea. This is how Maryam continues to be portrayed in the novel, as a side character where no real story develops except in relation to the life of the boy. Her story comes in flashbacks and asides, not a proper story at all.

The recollection continues, as ʿAlī and ʿĀ̄isha recall how she, only fourteen-years-old at the time, insists that she will serve the tea to the men, knowing that the service is offering herself in marriage (29). Besotted with ʿAlī, ʿĀ̄isha is surprised and delighted when a marriage is arranged. While she was certainly considered a bit young for marriage, the narrator explains, "The marriage of a girl was a blessing … in those times, the responsibility to fill her mouth with food, any food, would be finished" (28). The allusion to the hardships of the Nakba is left, however, to be developed at another time, just like the story of Maryam and her lover. From this memory, the narrative returns to the daily life of *al-ṣaghīr*, who still an infant, in the intervening pages discovers that he has feet, learns of the "blue swath," and begins a rivalry with the house chicken (66). It is only once the boy has moved to the new camp in Amman that his aunt takes on a larger role. By the time his father is imprisoned, she becomes the central figure of authority in his life. The two grow close, and even though ʿĀ̄isha later has more children, Maryam's "heart was closed to any but the boy" (57). The matter of the aunt's lover seems to have just been an aside, until another flashback narrates an interaction between the sisters. Its immediate function in the narrative is to explain the relationship between the women—between whom a rivalry seems to be developing over the boy, who spends less time at home, and more with his aunt. It is in the sisters' memory that Maryam's absent lover is named as Sulaymān, a mid-ranking corporal in the ALA who had promised the elder sister that when the war for Palestine was over, they would marry.

In the flashback, the sisters covertly read a letter from the corporal, and Maryam outwardly insists that Sulaymān will come back for her, while ʿĀ̄isha asks: "why all these words [in the letter] if he is so trustworthy?" (57) i.e. why won't he just come and marry her, and do away with the rhetoric. In a silent statement that illustrates the development of several stories simultaneously, Maryam reflects: "Whoever abandons the country for their own sake will not return" (59). The two had met before fighting had forced the family to leave their village, where Sulaymān had been stationed as part of the Arab forces fighting Zionist militias in the lead-up to 1948. At some point the two were separated, either because the

village fell, because the ALA moved its troops, or because its troops withdrew. Maryam's comment leaves the precise reasons for Sulaymān's departure unknown—whether it is because he has no real interest in Palestine (or in Maryam) or because he was called into battle to save the country—but it does shut down her sister's questions, as a sharp indication that the matter was closed. The flashback reveals in part the nature of the relationship between sisters, as well as the complexities of life and politics around 1948. The statement can be read as a dig at the ALA, which certainly did "leave the country for its own sake" and did not "return," or secure the return of the refugees. Told chapters apart, the snippets about Maryam's relationship with the ALA officer take on little meaning in and of themselves. They give context to other situations; background for the story of the marriage of *al-ṣaghīr*'s parents or an explanation of the continued presence of Maryam in the life of the boy. The central line of the narrative–the growing up of *al-ṣaghīr*—continues and as his life encounters Maryam's, a whole other set of narrative lines are developed. A third mention of Sulaymān provides a perfect example of the spiral technique in action, and how *Ṭuyūr* makes use of the spatial form to craft a particular logic of narrative. A close look at Chapter 38 shows how relationships are forged between locations and individuals outside of space and time, and how—in asking readers to suspend interpretation on a macro-story—a whole host of new relationships emerge. This ultimately creates meaning in a network of mutually referential instances and trajectories that as a collective bind together what according to the existing logic of national community would be read as disparate or fragmented. The following rather exhaustive run-through of a single chapter will give a good sense of the tight and complex networks that are being plotted within the text, of which Sulaymān and Maryam are but one small example.

Multiple trajectories

The first trajectory of narrative is a simple ordering of the information presented in Chapter 38, from first to last. This is made relatively easy, since the chapter is sub-divided into 13 segments, each of which are separated by a set of three characters "-⁎-" centred on the page. These mark the end of one segment and the start of the next. Looking at the way the first two segments are constructed will set the stage for an analysis of a longer list of the information presented in the whole chapter, and the narrative trajectory that their 'order'

sets out. Chapter 38 opens with a short description of the first winter that *al-ṣaghīr* spends in the Wiḥdāt refugee camp:

> Wiḥdāt camp.
> He would never forget that first winter.
> Like the first winter in the world.
> The cement cans spread out in the distance without an end in sight, and neither could she imagine one. A game of repetition in small rooms, in narrow alleyways... The earth was so muddy that feet would get tired from carrying all the caked earth until it was knocked off again. (80)

The scene continues with the boy describing how he negotiates the space of the camp, resulting really in a quasi-mapping of its geographic location and nearby landmarks. The opening pages of the chapter detail the first time *al-ṣaghīr* left his family's new house to go play on his own in the camp. The segment ends as the boy leaves the house, punctuated with the standard "-*-", and a new short section begins abruptly, seemingly unconnected to the first. It is not clear where or when the next scene is taking place. The only time markers are the birth order of the boy's siblings, which we know little about, and the father's desire to name his second son Jamāl, after Egypt's Arab-nationalist president Gamal Abd al-Nasser, who would have been at the peak of his popularity. This juxtaposes the space of the camp with a conversation the boy overhears between an aunt and his mother, where the former is trying to force the issue of a second wife. The short scene, in its entirety:

> -*-
> He asked her: All the other kids have brothers, how come I don't have one?
> She cried.
> He forgot his question for a long time, until it returned again.
> He screamed: Why don't I have a brother?
> She cried.
> His father's aunt said: You want a brother?
> He said: Yes.
> She said: We will marry your father.
> You mean to a woman not my mother?
> Ah.
> So he screamed: I'll break her head with a rock if she comes.
> The mother rejoiced. The aunt fumed. The father saw the whole scene and stayed silent, the father who had waited to be given a boy so he could name him Jamāl. (83)

It begins and ends as above without reference to the first scene, and closes with the same asterisk. As a reader continues, the two scenes must be held within the mind, which is already seeking to identify a relationship between the parts. Both are about the relationship between the boy and his family, but there is much more at stake. Another ten scenes unfold, each as seemingly unrelated as the first two. It is the fourth and sixth segments that are of particular interest here, since they reveal information on the relationship between Maryam and the corporal. The rest intersect with the countless other stories that make up the world of the boy.

As the scenes unfold, readers must continually "suspend the process of individual reference temporarily until the entire pattern of internal references can be apprehended as a unity."[11] Even an overview of the chapter reveals little in the way of a pattern of logic, or the impression of a wider image that the pages are working to produce. A brief summary:

> Chapter 38
>
> 1) First winter in Wiḥdāt. The houses and conditions are described. The boy wants to go out of the tent but his mother doesn't want him to. He goes.
> 2) The boy asks for a brother then is shocked when a relative suggests marrying his father to another woman.
> 3) Women fetching water from a well**,** doing their laundry. They are watched by the boy, who comes home wet and tells his mother he was [impossibly] at the sea.
> 4) Begins: "ʿA͂isha didn't have a house" revealing the young woman waiting for ʿAlī to arrive for the wedding ceremony. While waiting, Maryam is happy for ʿA͂isha. This happiness makes her "heart ache." A flashback to Maryam reading a letter from Sulaymān. Second flashback to first meeting of Maryam and Sulaymān as she goes to the well to fetch water. Maryam's reflections indicate they have had intercourse. Sulaymān's vision of Maryam narrated. Concludes with Maryam refusing to answer question of flashback: ʿA͂isha, "did he kiss you?"
> 5) Preparations for ʿA͂isha's wedding. ʿAlī's aunts criticize ʿA͂isha's body. Maryam calls the judgement of women against women "evil." Maryam wonders where Sulaymān is.
> 6) Sulaymān sees Maryam from his guard post. He goes to find her. Finds her at the well, describes her beauty. Thinks about her for three nights. Masturbates while on guard duty.
> 7) The wedding. ʿAlī shows ʿA͂isha their new 'house in a cave on a hill. Ḥalīma, ʿA͂isha's new stepmother, demands that everyone but the bride and groom sleep outside of the cave on the wedding night.
> 8) Story of how Ḥalīma got married to ʿAlī's father. His mother had died and exactly 39 days after he asked to marry the ugliest woman in the village so his children would be looked after. Umm Thurayyā, ʿAlī's aunt (who we elsewhere learn wanted to marry her daughter to ʿAlī, who was also the midwife for *al-ṣaghīr*,

and all of whose children die except a sickly Thurayyā), blames their too-soon marriage for the soon to follow death of her infant son, saying it jinxed him [because she was upset that ʿAlī would not take her daughter as a second wife].
9) Pastoral vignette on how the life in the cave on the hill proceeds.
10) Begins: "The war didn't forget anyone, they were set upon by the liberation army, which could not even liberate itself." Narrator says: "this broke ʿAbū ʿAlī." Marital discord between Ḥalīma and ʿAbū ʿAlī [ʿAlī's father].
11) More marital problems. ʿAbū ʿAlī threatens Ḥalīma.
12) Umm Thurayyā tells Ḥalīma not to blame ʿAbū ʿAlī.
13) ʿAlī and ʿĀ̈isha bring mattresses up to the cave to try and better the conditions there. Concludes: they were "still hoping to make a life there." (80-93)

None of the 13 scenes tell of events that happen directly to *al-ṣaghīr*. They do, however, tell of the community infrastructure within which his life is lived. The interactions between relatives and other displaced villagers give context to their encounters with *al-ṣaghīr*. They also illustrate part of the dense web of interactions that make up his community.

Without the life and character of *al-ṣaghīr* to act as a unifying figure for the different vignettes, the chapter makes little linear "sense." It certainly asks that a general interpretation be suspended, just as Frank described. Both the character of Umm Thurayyā and the spectre of war are given zero context—who are they? What is their significance?—within which to understand their dialogue or actions. This is also so in the novel as a whole: Umm Thurayyā is not formally introduced until the next chapter, so her comments hang in the narrative, awaiting a formal relationship with another piece of information. Reference to the war, however, comes with reference to the ALA, which can at least peg it to the Nakba. With the most obscure reference to an unknown character, and the least to a well-known narrative of the Nakba and the forces who fought in it, the rest of the information within the chapter jumps between the poles of known and unknown, proceeding in neither chronological nor thematic order.

Thinking about the chapter in non-linear terms and disassociating the parts from their page-order reveals four main narrative threads: that of Maryam and Sulaymān, that of ʿĀ̈isha and ʿAlī, that of Ḥalīma and ʿAbū ʿAlī, and that of the war. These relationships or elements of them figure in almost all of the sections of the chapter, intersecting and overlapping. Additionally, almost innumerable sub-themes emerge, from the theme of weddings, to romantic and familial love relationships, as well as the relationships between alternating characters in each of the pairs—so sections detailing interactions between Ḥalīma and

Umm Thurayyā develop their relationship, which connects sub-pairs to each of the main storylines. The same is true for the interacting between *al-ṣaghīr* and Umm Thurayyā (his father's aunt), who tells the boy that his father should marry again so that he can have a brother. The minor characters–like Umm Thurayyā—are developed in later chapters.

Dissociating the sub-sections from a linear or temporal logic also allows links to be forged between and across the vignettes. Organizing the parts by theme, by the characters that appear, or the location of the action means that diverse and inter-linked networks are created between the parts as they are read. These networks connect individuals, geographic features, experiences and politics to one another in a way that resembles the networks of exile, memory, and 'present absence' that mark the Palestinian community. For example, moving linearly, section two builds the relationship between *al-ṣaghīr* and his mother found in part one. In the first she is a woman that worries about where her son is, but then is portrayed as a mother fiercely guarded by her boy. Sections one and two also illustrate the wider sphere–geographic and social—within which the mother-son relationship exists: from the physical setting of the camp and the dangers outside, to the pressure to give a family boys, and the fear of being displaced by a second wife. This non-linearity gives a wider view of the mother-son relationship, how it functions and develops within an entire community instead of within just a nuclear family setting or through time.

Similar connections can be found between adjacent or even disconnected segments. The first and third segments seem to follow temporally from one another, and though out of any discernible order, sections 4, 6, 7, and 13 tell the story of ʿĀ̈isha's wedding to ʿAlī. The situations explained within these sections might also explain why ʿAlī would not take a second wife, connecting the story of ʿAlī and ʿĀ̈isha to the threat of a change in family structure hinted at in segment 2. Umm Thurayyā as a character is developed in section 13 from her appearance in segment 8; she seems to redeem herself after cursing their marriage and advises Ḥalīma to stay with her husband. Issues of gender and the social roles of women are also developed consistently in the chapter, with every section tackling it from a different angle. In terms of the chapter as a whole, its concluding section—where ʿAlī and ʿĀ̈isha are trying to build a life in the cave-home—is already undermined by the setting of the opening section that names Wiḥdāt camp as their new location.

Effectively, with this spiral of at once developing but halted multi-strands of meaning, "time-flow of the narrative is halted: attention is fixed on the interplay of relationships within the limited time-area."[12] This reinforces the creation of a narrative network that includes experiences and relationships, rather than a linear trajectory, and allows for the interpretation of events that might otherwise have been spatially separate in a simultaneous manner. Moreover, it allows for the 'incomplete' interpretation of partial narrative, where information is missing, where analysis must always be open for a new scene from the past, the present, in any number of locations and any number of futures. In fact, Maryam and Sulaymān's story is one of the only narrative threads that is wrapped up by the closing pages of the text. Thus, not only does the novel develop relationships along the multiple axes of theme, location, and time period simultaneously, but it also leaves open many of its storylines intimating a continuing spiral of narrative. This suggests that not all of the information a reader needs to make "sense" out of the information put forward is yet available. This undoes the notion of before/after, here/there in a historical sense, since information that would not otherwise fit within the paradigm of bounded space or linear time can be integrated into the narrative imagination.

The writing technique of the chapter, and indeed the whole novel, makes room for what Elias Khoury called the "struggle between presence and interpretation that never stopped since 1948."[13] The resulting narrative is one that eschews what Bakhtin might have called the 'chronotope of the nation,' where national meaning can only be created when space and time cohere in a particular way. In *Ṭuyūr*, segments of narrative produce their own independent and variable meanings, and in each the relationship between space and time is determined by multiple factors. With no stable relationship, associations between the segments are open to a huge variety of linkages. So where the page-order of the segments informs an interpretation of the collective—the closest possible 'linear' reading of the texts—the purposefully disjointed text means that various themes and meta-narratives are produced in each section, each chapter, and within the novel as a whole. The notion of a set relationship between space and time is thus undone. In putting the focus on networks, *Ṭuyūr* totally ignores borders (geographic boundaries) as well as 'significant' historical events (temporal boundaries), and allows for open interpretation of events.

Take the story of Maryam and Sulaymān. The two meet before the Nakba in the family's native village.[14] This prompts Maryam to refuse ʿAlī's proposal while the family is in the Dhueisheh refugee camp near Bethlehem. She is secretly waiting for Sulaymān to return, at once to liberate Palestine and to fulfil his promise of marriage, though he does neither. There is little more concrete information on the story of the once-lovers, until the final chapter of the novel. In Chapter 1 (recall that the novel counts chapters 'backwards'), the story of Maryam and Sulaymān picks up again in Amman. In the chapter's first segment, the police raid the home of Saʿud, a friend of *al-ṣaghīr*. This is followed by a segment telling about the boys of the neighbourhood reacting to the police raid, and running to find Maryam, whom they hope can help. In the third and final segment of the chapter, Maryam marches over to the police station to demand the release of the young boy. In this final section Maryam demands to speak with the director of the police station, who she recognizes immediately as Sulaymān:

> The policeman yelled at her: Show some respect and speak with manners to ʾAḥmad Bīk.
> Ahmad Bīk? For twenty years I looked for you, and waited for you and you were under my feet right here? For twenty years I rotted here–she beat her chest–I rotted here like all of those other people rotted and more […] your name wasn't the only lie, your entire being was a lie, it was on me to understand that a long time ago. (317)

Always told as part of other narratives—the reason ʿAlī and ʿĀ'isha got married, the excuse for a strong woman character in the life of *al-ṣaghīr*, an example by which to illustrate social and gender norms—the story of Maryam and Sulaymān is integrated within a tight network of meaning and action, yet it also stands alone as significant.

Indeed, all of Maryam's doubts about Sulaymān as a soldier in the ALA have a direct bearing on that other idea being developed in their story: that of the loss of Palestine. Trusted, fooled, and abandoned, Maryam is left waiting, or in her words "rotting here like all of those other people." At the close of the novel, one of the foggiest and least developed relationships in the network is revealed as a brutal betrayal but also as a mistake. As Maryam says, "it was on me to understand that a long time ago." Essentially, this realization and the betrayal that preceded it, play only the part of one relationship within the complex network of the text. The portrayal of an Arab failure of Palestine becomes just one element of *al-ṣaghīr*'s life, integrated into a complex series of structures and events that

lead him from birth to death. The novel's focus is on the ramifications of these relationships, what they result in and how they change the very personal experience of a Palestinian nation. So too for the notion of the loss of Palestine. While never once detailing the physical process of dispossession, *Ṭuyūr* intimately captures its meaning, and begins to write the intricate story of an on-going Nakba into the lives of Palestinian characters and into the way that Palestine as a nation can today be imagined, its network crisscrossing the Nakba and a changing political geography.

Ṭuyūr's technique of networked narrative shows that the 'whole story' cannot be told in a linear fashion—there is no 'storyline' in the conventional sense, and the 'whole' of the narrative cannot be attached to either one location or thread. At first this technique is achieved because the protagonist is too young to process the information around him, and then later by adopting a mode of narrative that demands suspended interpretation; where no conclusions can be drawn as myriad strands of narrative continue to unfold. This goes some way to re-routing the idea that time is contained within bounded space, and suggests an alternative relationship that relies less on boundaries and more on relationship. It also suggests how an innovative narrative network is able to tell a particularly Palestinian story, and represent the on going and changing nature of its national community.

What's in a nation?

It is the alternative cartography set out in *Ṭuyūr* that spurred—or to use Bloom's term, 'influenced'—the writing of *Ṭifl al-mimḥa* [Eraser Child] (2000). Published four years later, it was the 'first' novel to carry from its debut the series title *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya*, and was released simultaneously with a second edition of *Ṭuyūr*, now also included within the series. In theoretical terms, *Ṭifl* picked up precisely where *Ṭuyūr* left off. Where the 'first' made possible the connections of individuals and events in the absence of homogeneous empty time, the 'second' would create a framework within which to understand the functioning of structures of power that had once been invisible (and indeed embedded) within the frame of the nation-state. Seen thus, it appears little coincidence that the pair of works together mark the fascinatingly ambiguous launch of a series whose very aim is to reconstruct problematic linear time and forge connections between diverse and non-contiguous locations. Given such a theoretical context, it seems fitting that *Ṭifl* is set

outside any land claimed as Palestinian, and yet treats precisely the structures of power that would shape Palestinian life in the years before the Nakba.

Set in the British Mandate territories of the 1930s-50s, *Ṭifl* replaces the idea of sovereignty as a pre-requisite for the nation with a mechanism within which to read overlapping and simultaneous structures of power. Sovereignty presumes an "administrative monopoly [exercised] over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence."[15] In *Ṭifl,* five administrative monopolies are explored, their conventions delineated, so that the idea of sovereignty is subverted as a precursor for the nation, and made into a context (with emphasis on 'text') that Palestine developed alongside. Using intertextual devices, *Ṭifl*'s narrator shows the reader how to identify and understand the conventions that identify different structures, and to gradually learn how to read these structures as architexts within an inter-textual millieux.

Though there is little to indicate whether Naṣrallāh anticipated the launch of *al-Malhāt* when he began writing *Ṭifl*, or indeed if he saw the novel as a continuation of the first, he was certainly still engaged in the same program of historical research in preparation for that elusive national epic. This research took him into the past of Jordan, Palestine, and the details of the British mandates. During his course of research, he read, heard stories of, and imagined the battles waged between Zionist forces, the British, their locally staffed army the British Legion, and the Palestinian resistance. This research was surely the inspiration for the story of *Ṭifl al-mimḥa*, whose post-script notes that the novel "relies on a number of political and historical sources, in addition to journalistic accounts in articles and books," as well as oral testimonies and biographies (279). This historical research created the setting for *Ṭifl*'s protagonist, Fūʿad. Drawn up into the events of his time, Fūʿad becomes one of those soldiers that lost Jerusalem, and returns home defeated. Unlike *Ṭuyūr,* however, Fūʿad does not so much create a logic of narrative as he does reflect the many forces that oversaw the loss of Palestine to Zionist forces. This reading is reinforced by the fact that, with the exception of a falafel restaurant owner in Jerusalem who treats Fūʿad to lunch in celebration of the hoped-for ALA victory, the novel features no living Palestinian characters. This forces a reader to question the role of the novel in the story of the nation. If

it is not about the lands of Palestine, or the Palestinian people, what of the story of Fūʿad is the seminal to the story of the nation?

Joining first the British Legion, and later the ALA, Fūʿad shapes and is shaped by the rise of the military-colonial and neo-colonial projects that would define the region, and begin to form the geopolitical boundaries that the contemporary Palestinian nation continues to struggle against. As the forces that drive the life of Fūʿad, these power structures become the subject of *Ṭifl*'s narrative. They become—as part of *al-Malhāt*—characters in the story of Palestine. *Ṭifl* thus makes visible structures of power that had become embedded in the way that the Palestinian nation was thought. In excavating them, the structures are rendered as texts, imagined along the lines of the story of Maryam and Sulaymān: a text within a text. Understood thus, the texts can operate with a certain degree of autonomy within narrative; being read into other texts, and understood as whole or complete units that must be taken into account. It calls attention to the political forces that had, and would continue, to shape the nation. As just one part (one text) within the national story, sovereignty and the systems that encapsulate it can be taken into account along with a wider sphere of political manoeuvrings over which Palestinians had little or no control.

The story of Fūʿad –and the loss of Palestine— is told in five parts, which roughly correspond to the five structures of power that the soldier grows up with. These structures (patriarchy, imperialism, proto-imperialism, pan-Arabism, and nationalism) are developed in distinct chapters, which are each set in distinct locations. The novel begins with a chapter titled, "Lesson [*dars*] in peach fuzz… lesson in exhaustion," which depicts his early family life in a remote northern Arabian Desert village around the 1930s. This sets up the first site of narrative, and a location for the exploration of the family structure and questions of patriarchy, from birth to adolescence (the time of peach fuzz). The next chapter, "Lesson of esteem without pedigree," sees Fūʿad enter an army training camp run by the British Legion. Here he will be trained for service to the British, then in control of both Palestine and Transjordan under a Mandate from the League of Nations. It is here that Fūʿad is able to advance outside of the patriarchal structure of the village, gaining "esteem without pedigree." This is where the novel explores imperialism through its examination of the British system, and how it exercised control through the Legion as a military force, and on the members of the Legion themselves. A third chapter, "Lesson in love letters, lesson in

rank," sees Fūʿad transferred into the service—acting as a British soldier—of Amman's local leadership, an arena that essentially reproduces the imperial power structure in a proto-imperialist setting that disrupts local power structures and to some extent displaces them with the imperialist model. The fourth is Fūʿad's decision to join up with the ALA, "Lesson in anger!!!" and his entry into that military hierarchy, investigating the alternative structure of the Pan-Arab movement, until finally, in the fifth chapter, Fūʿad is faced with the chaos of disintegrating power systems and an ALA whose leadership is more concerned about national (and indeed personal) interests than the cause of Palestine. In the final chapter, "Lessons in wonders and wonder," he has an emotional breakdown when he is separated from his ALA unit somewhere outside of Jerusalem, revealing the problems of the logics of the structures he has adopted, and which have adopted him.

When Fūʿad lives within each of these structures, he does not question or challenge their aims, values, or customs. Each, in effect, has total and 'sovereign' control over him within their geographic space of operation. A reader learns this principally from the narrator, who is often scathing when he speaks about or addresses Fūʿad, saying things like "but the truth is that you didn't know" (55), or interjecting to interpret why Fūʿad has done something saying "in my opinion" (70). The narrator also calls Fūʿad's actions into question, commenting, for example: "the thing that doesn't stop confusing me …" (53). So while Fūʿad may not be critical of those in power—whoever they may be—the narrator certainly is. He is also critical of Fūʿad. This position is set up on the first page of the novel, where the narrator addresses Fūʿad directly, and urges him to "look closely" (*inẓar jayīdan*):

> Corporal Fūʿad tried as much as he could to focus in the direction that his friend was pointing him, but he saw nothing.
> [Narrator] "Do you see what I see?"
> Corporal Fūʿad gestured with his head, for he did not want to let on that he could not see what his friend saw. But he said: Yes.
> [Narrator] "Do you see it clearly?"
> He gestured again, he was less certain about himself and about his friend!
> [Narrator] "I see your dear mother busy with the washing […] do you see her?"
> Corporal Fūʿad gestured with his head a third time, but he wasn't sure that he was looking in the right direction. (9)

What Fūʿad sees and what the narrator wishes he sees are not the same thing. This creates a dynamic between reader, narrator, and protagonist that implicates the reader in a corrective

process, since the narrator addresses much of the work to "you" [*inta*]. Though the narrator addresses Fūʿad, grammatically, he is also addressing the reader, creating the sense of mutual culpability. That the reader can also see Fūʿad's mistakes means that it is on the reader to think of ways to redress the problems that the protagonist is unable to see. This is how the chapters become a *dars*: they are asking the reader to "study" alongside the protagonist, indeed to study the actions of the protagonist and identify the problematic way he goes about supporting structures of power.

It is these devices that make *Ṭifl* a novel about the structures that shaped contemporary Palestinian history and experience. Dominance is revealed as a problem within the structures themselves, and not an attribute of their power or value. Despite their different aims, each assumes that theirs are the most legitimate, indeed the only legitimate structure at the expense of the others. Within the village, therefore, patriarchy makes no room for imperialism (to its own detriment). This is the same for imperialism, which makes no room for pan-Arabism, and so on. The narrative goes to show that none of these structures that claim power because of their assumed sovereignty can remain powerful precisely because of this problematic assumption. Fūʿad's journey through the structures of power that shaped the modern Palestinian nation, then, reveals that no sovereignty is able to operate "fully, flatly, and evenly […] over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory,"[16] as Anderson described the national case. Indeed, in each chapter Fūʿad enters, adopts, and perpetuates the particular power structures he is within, but in travelling between them he challenges and subverts –at least for readers, and at times for himself—the claim of each to a sort of sovereignty over individuals.

While patriarchy is assumed to be the dominant and even sovereign form of power in the region of the village, and in the home of Fūʿad, elements of the narrative already suggest that it is not. There are hints even in the first chapter of the other structures of power that will overlap with and operate beside patriarchy later in the text. Even in the narrator's first description of Fūʿad the influence of another structure that will claim dominance can be seen. The young boy, the narrator notes, loved reading of "Gulliver and Napoleon," and as he grew up he "dreamed of being the third" (56). Fūʿad wants to be the third hero, and does not read in *Gulliver's Travels* the satire that the Anglo-Irish Jonathan Swift intended. Nor does he read anything ominous into the adventures of Napoleon Bonaparte, who declared

himself Emperor and was defeated in ten years. That the stories of the lives of an English and French 'hero' were even available to Fūʿad in rural Transjordan was more than likely due to the years of colonial squabbling over the Levant, which had only two decades before been carved up between the French and English. The family structure, then, was not sovereign over its village space. Though its hierarchies and value sets made no room for competing structures or parallel hierarchies, village life was increasingly imposed upon and undermined by imperial forces that had by now settled themselves into the region.

Multiple structures, one story

Imperialism as a structure of power is already present within and beneath the patriarchal system of Fūʿad's home life. When he gets into trouble locally, the family's answer is to send him off to join the British Legion–the colonial military force founded to protect the borders of the territory mandated to the British in 1921. Though seen on the surface as a way out of the village structure, Fūʿad is in fact joining a branch of the forces lead by the infamous British lieutenant Glubb Pasha,[17] whose stray bullet aimed at a gazelle had killed his older brother years earlier. While unrecognized or unaccounted for, family and imperial structures of power had been clashing and competing in the village for years. This clash served to structure the life of the village even as things continued along the assumption that it operated under a patriarchal system.

Patriarchy had for the most part been embedded in the life of the isolated village on the edge of the desert, settings the tenor of the events in the novel's first chapters. From scenes where his mother hangs the washing, to his sisters cooking dinner, and his father in the fields, the setting is rural, the focus the family, and the prevailing structure of power one that assumes the "dominance of the Father (patriarch), the centre around which … the natural family are organized."[18] Under this patriarchal system, "the paternal will is the absolute will, mediated in both society and the family by a forced consensus based on ritual and coercion."[19] It is this that invisibly structures the relationship between Fūʿad and his seven sisters "Saʿīda, Sūʿad, Sumaīyya, Sanīa, Samīra, Nabīla and Shams" (46), who would "give you anything you wished […] but your gaze wouldn't rise toward their faces to read what feelings they had toward you in their features" (46). The rule of the father, the subservience of the sisters, all invisibly and without much comment show how "between ruler and ruled, between father and child, there exist only vertical relations."[20]

Structure is much less invisible when Fūʿad enters the realm of the British Legion, where the rules and regulations that create and enforce the hierarchy of British imperial forces come across much more clearly as an imposed structure of power. In *Ṭifl* the British are only ever represented through their military infrastructure, the pinnacle of order and hierarchy. Putting the colonial system into stark relief, all of the commanding officers that feature in the text are English, and the soldiers drawn from the local population. The commanders give the orders, which are designed to serve their own needs, and the locals enlisted obey. It is precisely the unequal relationship set out in the colonial structure. Moreover, the underlying purpose of the British Legion taking on local manpower is to exercise not only military dominance over a population in order to enforce control, but as an "instrument for the pacification and integration of a predominantly tribal society into a state to whose central authority the tribes became responsive and to whose administrative control they became subjected."[21]

Once inside the British Legion, Fūʿad works constantly to earn the approval of others, and to fit neatly within (and even rise through) the system of ranks and power, mostly because this is how approval is shown. His interactions with British officials come to represent the imperial structure, and the hierarchies of power that lie therein. Officials use Fūʿad to attain their own goals, and boost him through the system to gain his further acquiescence to the plans of officials. But, just as he plays the role of the son without complaint, when Fūʿad arrives in the British army camp in "the capital," he is quickly picked out as someone who will "play your role in the game" (57). Totally engrossed in the British system, Fūʿad pays little attention to the wider implications of British presence. As the narrator tells us: "the thing we can be sure of here, is that you didn't know a thing about that which was circling around you" (57); much like in the village, Fūʿad accepts his role without question.

Thanks to the critical voice of the narrator and the total haplessness of Fūʿad, the interests of colonial power in preserving its own stature, and not in any way looking out for the interests of those it rules, is revealed. This structure appears to be repeated in the Jordanian government, which was at this point basically an arm of the British, despite nominal independence in 1946. This is evidenced in the text when Fūʿad is transferred from the army base to the home and office of the local government in "the capital" (Amman). As a nod to the relationship between the powers, the narrator notes that Fūʿad was "the favourite

present from the chief of the army to the chief of the city" (102). And indeed, Jordan's King ʿAbdāllāh towed the British line (the British had installed him after all).[22] The chapters dealing with Fūʿad's time in the employ of the Sayīd Al-bilād (the head of the city/country) show how one structure of power mirrored and mimicked the other.

However, just as the dominance of the village patriarchal system is undercut by the British, so too is British authority challenged by patriarchy, as well as emerging nationalist sentiments in by then independent Jordan.[23] For example, when the women of the city start writing Fūʿad love letters, and insist on accompanying their high-ranking husbands or fathers on their official visits so they can flirt with Fūʿad, the soldier's appeal as a possible patriarch endangers his ability to represent the British. He is, as his father had hoped, the pinnacle of patriarchal power, though he has attained it through the British. That same power gets him unwittingly into trouble. As a low-ranking soldier and a villager, pursuing any of the women would end his career. When "a number of people learned about your situation" (107), it becomes only a matter of time before gender politics embedded in the system of patriarchy drive Fūʿad out of the service of the British… and into the ALA.

It is not only the love letters that push Fūʿad toward the ALA. The protesters gathered outside the official offices in the capital, and his closest friend's arrest during one of the protests spur him to action. For the first—and only time—dissent factors in to Fūʿad's life course. The love letters first saw Fūʿad move out of the official residence and into a more private accommodation alongside his friend Yaqʿūb. For the first time not living directly within either a family or military system, Fūʿad is exposed to dissent in the form of popular protests against the withdrawal of the British from Palestine. The demonstrations turn out to be significant, becoming at once the first instance of unrest directed at wider systems of colonial-type control and of schism between the 'people' and those who claim sovereignty over them. When Fūʿad's friend Yaqʿūb joins the demonstrations and gets arrested, the young man accidently gets involved in politics when he tries to use his connections to the Sayīd Al-bilād to secure his friend's release.

Though Fūʿad saw nothing of dissent in the request—merely asking a man he is loyal to for a favour to undo what he believes is a mistake—it is not granted because the release of a dissident would not serve any larger political interest. Though it does not have an

immediate impact on the still naïve Fūʿad, the narrator's interjections cue the reader into what will be the first of two friends who force a challenge to the protagonist's blind trust in leading systems:

> [Yaqʿūb was] the first friend of your life, well, the only friend of your life, even if we know that another friend would displace him after years in the field of war, which would bring the second friend; we mean that Norwegian officer. (83)

A figure I will return to in the final section, the Norwegian officer alongside Yaqʿūb, can be read as the two individuals who crack the blind belief in controlling systems, and insert a measure of doubt into the life of Fūʿad. Now on a path to Palestine, Fūʿad's destiny is cemented when he returns home for a visit and learns that his uncle had gone to fight there and been martyred (121). It is with this backdrop that, in the build-up to what would come to be the Nakba, Fūʿad joins the ALA, as it proceeds toward Jerusalem with the aim of liberating the nascent nation from Zionist forces. Sections on his experience with the ALA, which are once again similar to his earlier experiences with the region's political geography, make up the final two chapters of the novel. The story of the ALA is told through Fūʿad's gullibility, willingness to believe what he is told, and his desire for victory and recognition. Like patriarchal and colonial systems, Pan-Arabism claims to offer an alternative structure of power to be operational over a particular geographical region or group of people. In theory, the ALA was an expression of a growing movement of Pan-Arabism, a "nationalist notion of cultural and political unity,"[24] that—if the narrator of *Ṭifl* is to be believed—by and large replicates the power structures of patriarchy and imperialism, albeit with a different idea of geography and belonging.

Each of the structures not only shapes the life of Fūʿad, but so long as he is operating inside these of their imagined sovereignties, they in fact set the limits of the possible. So closely does Fūʿad embrace the structures and their norms, that he internalizes their rules and hierarchies, acting them out in his everyday life. While his mimicry goes unchallenged in the village and even during his time in the British Legion, once Fūʿad enters the ALA and begins the road that will 'lose Palestine,' the novel's narrator begins to launch his moth scathing criticism. This meta-textuality and its comment on the gap between the rhetoric and action of Arab states in the late 40s brings the problem of power structures into sharp relief. In revealing the imagined and problematic 'sovereignty' of the ALA, its claims and

failures, the problems of the earlier-described structures come into greater relief. This exposes the reality of competing sovereignties, and reveals the impossibility of having three separate structures of power that operate as if exclusively over a given area. Through the ALA, then, the idea of ultimate control for family, Mandate, or ALA is shown as impossible within the region of Palestine. Instead, claims to this sort of control are revealed to exist within a complex network of power structures. At the same time as the idea of the nation-state and the 'sovereign' control of one power structure over a defined area was becoming the "most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time,"[25] *Ṭifl* exposes this as an impossibility. Instead, the novel shows the myth of control and power implementation, and how this myth and its diverse operation shape the life of a nation.

"Marked by disunity, mutual suspicion, and cross-purposes,"[26] Fūʿad's experience with the ALA makes it easy to identify its stated aim of liberating Palestine as problematic. That "antagonisms and suspicions undermined any hope of firm, realistic decision-making"[27] between the different parties involved in the army, is certainly a description borne out in Fūʿad's experience. Sent to the ALA training camp with the blessing of the Sayīd al-bilād, Fūʿad carries not only the rhetoric of a hoped-for success, but also the gift of a shiny British rifle. For an army short on supplies, it was perhaps not surprising that once across the River Jordan, "news of the rifle reached [Fūʿad's ALA unit commander] Assad Bīk" quickly (184). While the commander "couldn't have determined the difference between two rifles or the difference between two [of his own] men" (184), he is determined to have the rifle for himself, or at least to confiscate it from Fūʿad, feeling that it bolsters the soldier's authority over his own. And so, the commander, instead of focusing on how to save Palestine, goes "to war with one of his men" (184).

At once linking the ALA to British tools of colonialism (from the desert forces to the arms that repressed demonstrations calling for independence), focus on the rifle serves to undermine and expose the power structures underpinning the ALA, as an extension of Pan-Arabism. Rivalry, pride, and empty sentiment thus collude to ensure Fūʿad is an ineffective soldier. The ALA is represented as manipulative, claiming victory so as to falsely spur on its soldiers, sending them in unprepared and ill equipped. From shuffling off a sheikh who says the wrong thing as the troops set to head across the Jordan and replacing him with one who waxes long on assured victory, to the radio stations from Beirut and Cairo declaring

victories that never were, the ALA makes claims to power that are largely empty. In what is historically recognized as a military destined for ineffectiveness with supplies routed, weapons delayed, command fractured, and orders uncoordinated,[28] Fūʿad's first real experience in battle was a catastrophe: "it all happened swiftly, with a swiftness you couldn't imagine, they opened fire, they advanced, and you fired your first bullet … it was your first and your last" (220). With the first shot from his immaculate gun, Fūʿad's experience with the ALA is over. He is separated from his unit, and without a structure to govern his life and actions he has a breakdown.

Left finally to narrate the failings of sovereignty, *Ṭifl* draws a dark contrast between the songs and ululations that greet the ALA forces on their entry to Jerusalem (178) and the total uselessness of Fūʿad and his ilk. While certainly uncritical of the Palestinians who welcomed the forces and believed just as Fūʿad did that they would be liberated by the Arab armies of the ALA, at the heart of the narrative are the problem of sovereignty and its idea of singular dominance over a defined area. Indeed, the idea is firmly linked to colonialism, and even the spread of nationalism, "transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness to a wide variety of social terrains" and which brought with it the assumption of sovereignty over the nation space. Where some narratives of modern Palestine often begin at, or re-tell the Nakba in some way, many others look to a moment before the Nakba that is often painted with nostalgia.[29] *Ṭifl* does neither, and rather re-thinks the very notion of sovereignty, so that instead of what Ouyang, citing Paul Ricoeur, hints as one of the "operative configuring structure[s]" of the modern Arabic novel, sovereignty is un-mapped, and revealed as a force acting upon Palestine, not confining it.

This can in fact already be seen in *Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar*, where in the guise of the perception of a confused child narrator, spaces are stitched together through their thematic and imaginative connections, rather than their geographical or geopolitical cohesion. After a neighbour of *al-ṣaghīr* is killed in one of the quarries of Bethlehem outside of the Dhueisheh refugee camp, the child protagonist describes:

> The men descended toward the cemetery, with its tombs resting between longing for the other plain between the last mountain where the narrow street rises toward Ashrafiyeh, and that wide plateau that would lead to the Wiḥdāt camp. (40)

Imagining Palestine based on these geographic features would place Dhueisheh camp near contiguous with Wiḥdāt. In reality, the two are some 75 kilometers apart as the crow flies, and more than this, they are on opposite sides of the Jordan River, which before 1948 and after 1967 marked the borders between Jordan/Transjordan and the British Mandate/Occupied West Bank (and always the Eastern limit of what is today considered historic Palestine). Without differentiation between an area of historic Palestine and one across the river on the East Bank of the Jordan River, or indeed without recounting the experiences along the road between one space and the other, the narrative seamlessly connects locations across space. This was not the first time that the two refugee camps were imagined as contiguous. Earlier in the novel *al-ṣaghīr*, nursing outside of the cave that they have made their home on a hill outside of Dhueisheh:

> Turned his face from his mother's breasts, he focused his eyes with a strange insistence, they settled on a small point, and Aisha knew that no strength would open them now… His face turned to the region of Jabl Amman, to the top of Jabl al-Fasīḥa that was strung along with houses, and to the edges of Jabl Nazāl, and the walls that ended with the Electric Company. (26)

The infant's descriptions of both camps are on the one hand exact: the rolling hill of Dhueisheh, the network of mountains and valleys that link Wiḥdāt to Amman and its mountains. Like the narrative of the funeral, however, in the way the boy understands the camps, distance is erased. As Franco Moretti describes in his *Atlas of the European Novel* "by following 'what happens' we come up with a mental map of the many 'wheres' of which our world is made,"[30] but more than a knitting together of the English city and countryside as in Moretti's examples of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott who incorporated the "internal periphery into the larger unit of the state,"[31] the inter-textual imagining of a nation finds a way of imagining Palestine no longer as fragments, but as a whole and single experience.

Paired with its predecessor, *Ṭifl* and *Ṭuyūr al-ḥadhar* not only launched *al-Malhāt* as a series, but together they are able to break open the paradox of imagining that had hitherto prevented a whole and complex Palestinian national imaginary. They challenge the idea of bounded space and linear time, making room for the ever-presence of memory and continued development of multiple and connected narratives and structures. The novels developed ways of relating the elements of the nation in new orders and patterns. Taken

together, the techniques form the foundation of inter-textuality. The whirling and web-like pattern of narrative that de-links bounded space from linear time, and a subsuming of power structures into story telling so as to allow individuals, events, and locations to exist in new relationships. Putting this into practice, none of the novels of *al-Malhāt* would be set in the same geopolitical or historical time-space. This put into practice the idea of a multi-cited Palestine that traverses geo-temporalities, and of a nation that works within and between structures of power. In breaking down the structures that had hitherto been modularized within a the state's conception of the nation, the first two of *al-Malhāt* also expose the structures at work behind the construction of national narratives, making clear that structures are part of the story.

This made way for works of the Palestine project to go deeper into questions of power, narrative and structure as tools that—like the structures dictating the life of Fūʿad—limit the expression of Palestinian national community. Once the nation-state paradox was overcome in terms of the assumptions made by narrative to imagine the form, narrative itself and the process of meaning making could be critiqued. Later works would explore the limits of narrative form as a way of experimenting with radical inter-textuality as a way to make space for an alternative from of narrative, one that no longer fought the dominant paradigm, but that created a logic of its own.

Chapter 4 – Subsuming structures

In her *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*, Farha Ghannam studied a community of uprooted urban poor. She looked at the ways space was used to create and negotiate different forms of group identity.[32] The site of the balcony was a subject examined in some detail, as Ghannam observed it functioning as "a 'stage'," a place that was "used to interact with others and to present the self in public."[33] For a community formed "based on attachment to local custom, family honour and solidarity,"[34] the balcony was a space where the rules of public space did not quite apply, but from which the public could be observed. A vantage and a crossing point between inside and out, the balcony is a position of surveillance and site of social control. The balcony becomes Michel Foucault's watchtower, the streets a Panopticon where "power has

its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes."[35] It is this loaded symbol that Naṣrallāh's second series the *Shurafāt* develops as a tool of narrative, and a frame from which to examine the role of dominant structures—structures of power, including government, police, family, 'tradition,' and the nation-state itself—in imagining and restricting the idea of a Palestinian national community.

Both a site of power and a place from which the mechanisms of power can be observed, the *shurfa* [balcony] is at once the place of control and the location of control's undoing. It is from this position that attributes of the novel and its relationship to the system of the nation-state become visible. This is precisely the position that the works of the *Shurafāt* take. They are positioned outside of the national narrative, but within the world of the nation state; they have the double view of understanding how the state functions within a wider complex of structures, and work to understand and undermine the dominance of the frames that they observe. From the balcony, the existence of multiple and competing power structures becomes clear, and even more significantly, the relationship of these structures to the nation and the individual. In particular, it is the structures that undergird and pre-date the nation-state that are identified from the unique position. Gazed on from the balcony, the nation is no longer the "modular" entity that Anderson described. In Europe "discrete historical forces" were imagined to have come together at a particular point in time to create a separate and distinct, "modular" structure called the nation state. For Anderson, these forces included "the large cultural systems that preceded it [the nation], out of which—as well as against which—it came into being."[36]

Though Anderson did not look at these "forces" as structures of power, this is what they become within the works of the Palestine project. For Anderson, these forces included "pre-existing patterns of religious community […] and dynastic systems of authority"[37] as well as a particular conception of relationship with time. A critical look at these "forms" as structures of power then begs the question: if these cultural factors in Europe lead to the emergence of nationalism, and nationalism as a modular force was exported wholesale, what then happens to the "ideological constellations" that existed and pre-dated the nation in those sites of export? In this context, the 'ideological constellations' operate as precisely what anthropologist Clifford Geertz has described as "primordialisms," as the "preferred

bases for the demarcation of autonomous political units" in the absence of a nation-state.[38] In the context of the Middle East, Geertz identified the institutions of family, religion, and town/city/camp hierarchies as those "preferred bases" for demarcation, and I will go further to suggest systems of power. Using the concepts unearthed in the *Shurafāt*, not only do the parts of the once modular nation become more clear, but so too do the "primordialisms" that the nation-state system was "transplanted" onto. In the context of Palestine, and the post-colonial Middle East, where state systems are at play but remain somewhat distinct from those of family, religion, and local hierarchies, it seems crucial to understand how these structures interact.

The dynamics of a de-modularized nationalism that it becomes possible to see from the position of the 'balcony' seem significant and under-explored in all cases where the nation-state replaced, displaced, or became enmeshed in pre-existing power structures. It is precisely this that Palestinian literature generally (indeed, even Arabic literature as a whole), and Naṣrallāh's Palestine project in particular, encounter. Each must take into account how systems of representation, control, and community making were absorbed, co-opted, or sidelined by nationalism. Since *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya* set out specifically to write the nation outside of the parameters of the state, this work fell to the *Shurafāt*. Once these complex events and processes are teased out and understood, ways had to be found to imagine the nation beyond –but not in the absence of– these structures. The issue became one of a double de-modularizing.

Where space and time in the national imaginary had been forced apart through the use of writing techniques able to conjure the experiences of the Palestinian nation, this was only the first part of the battle. Next, the visible and invisible structures of power that participate and propagate the dominant national imaginary had to be engaged with as well. Inter-textuality works to re-imagine the spatial and temporal parameters of an idea formed around the nation-state, as the previous chapter showed. However, when it comes to "primordialisms" and other existing power structures, these 'texts' must not so much be disassembled as displaced from their position of dominance. This creates a literary model of how, for example, patriarchal systems can be understood as part of the stuff of narrative, but not be allowed to form or curtail that which narrative makes possible.

Samira Aghacy has written about the complex process by which patriarchal structures, or what she calls "male power," operates within a complex social structure. In her description she outlines the workings of what, in the sections below, will be examined as not just patriarchy, but also structures of state, of religion, and of a codified 'tradition.' So, for a definition of these structures of power, Aghacy is quite useful. She writes: "'Male power' is circumscribed in institutions and social mores. This power naturalized hierarchy and domination over women, and subordinate men, taking a variety of forms and it intersects with various family, class, religious, and political systems."[39] By turning power into a 'text,' and writing this inter-textually as an architext that operates within a complex set of textual practises to dictate what can be told, structures of power are revealed as structures and their modes of operation can be discerned. In the works of the Palestine project, and in the *Shurafāt* most obviously, this process of revealing is achieved by three principal means.

First, novels of the *Shurafāt* use paratextual, architextual, and transtextual devices to reveal the extent to which structures are relied upon to guide both the social action of characters and the possible literary meanings produced by each work. Second, criticism of the limits of narrative is built into the stories being told in each novel via metatextuality, drawing attention to the culpability of structures in curtailing what it is possible to tell, and to imagine. Finally, structures themselves are treated as texts. They are portrayed as dynamic forces constantly in process, and become readable as inter-texts. The intertextual devices employed to explore how structures of power operate come to explain the mechanisms by which power acts in society and narrative. It is thus that structures of power are shown, just like authorial use of a preface, an editor's note, or the structure of a news article, to have their own internal assumptions about what and how meaning is made, as well as particular mechanisms to go about making meaning. The effect of these narrative strategies is to parse out the structures that undergird the nation-state (and which also invisibly participate in creating the nation in the absence of a state) using techniques of radical inter-textuality as well as more subtle forms. These tend to draw attention to not only the architexts of different modes of narrative, but also to the conventions of 'social architexts' and even the structure of a wider episteme.

The most radical case in point is *Shurfat al-hadhayān* [Balcony of Delirium], the first of the *Shurafāt*, published immediately after a double volume of works was published in the sister

series. Written in one sitting,[40] *Hadhayān* marked the urgent first writing of state structures, at a time that marked an early peak in *al-Malhāt*. As if an outpouring of thoughts and ruminations on the violence of state structures and the problems of narrative frames, there seems little doubt that the writing of this parallel series was 'influenced' (in Bloom's terms) by the first. However, just what the nature of the relationship between the two was, as we will see shortly, was being worked out in the pages of the novel itself.

Forms and functions

The first reading of *Shurfat al-hadhayān* [Balcony of Delirium] (2004) is confusing. The novel induces the delirium promised in its title, making use of a stream-of-consciousness style it plays with narrative convention and the assumed structure of meaning of different types of text as a way of totally disorienting a reader. Textual structures are incorporated pell-mell into the novel, so that a reader must interpret a poem as though it is a dream, a newspaper article as the sub-text of a troubled home life, or a photograph as punctuation. Myriad texts, contexts, and conventions free-float; the narrative voice never stabilizes. In order to take meaning from the novel, work must be done beyond seeking meaning from words in order to generate narrative from the texts and their juxtaposition. The process a reader must undertake in order to 'make sense' of the narrative is essentially a 'crash course' in reading structures of power, and beginning to see how these structures can take part in making meaning, instead of directing or conscribing meaning.

In its simplest terms, *Hadhayān* is a novel about Rashīd al-Nimr, a man who returns from work in the Gulf where he had been living and sending remittances to his wife and children. Upon return, he begins work at a government information office, struggling to settle in at home, at work, and in the city where he now lives. It is in many ways the story of an ordinary man working out how he fits into a rapidly changing world. While the story of Rashīd is relatively straightforward, the way it is delivered is anything but. The most radical example of *Hadhayān*'s subsumation of structures into narrative is its unconventional use of images. There are 29 [similar to those in Figure 6 below] spread haphazard across the novel's 202-pages. These include 13 photographs, five paintings/ sketches, three film/ TV stills, four newspaper articles, and four instances of font play. Each is embedded within the text [Figure 6], and while some seem to directly illustrate

something mentioned on the same page, others appear without comment or apparent connection.

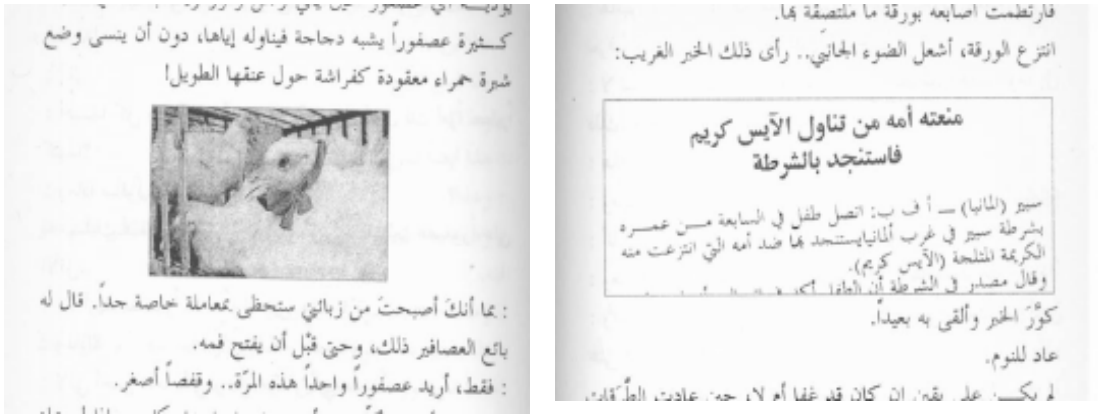

كـثيرة عصفوراً يشبه دجاجة فيناوله إياها، دون أن ينسى وضع
شيرة حمراء معقودة كفراشة حول عنقها الطويل!
: بما أنكَ أصبحتَ من زبائني ستحظى بمعاملة خاصة جداً. قال له
بائع العصافير ذلك، وحتى قبْل أن يفتح فمه.
: فقط، أريد عصفوراً واحداً هذه المرّة.. وقفصاً أصغر.
فارتطمت اصابعه بورقة ما ملتصقة بها.
انتزع الورقة، أشعل الضوء الجانبي.. رأى ذلك الخبر الغريب:
منعته أمه من تناول الآيس كريم
فاستنجد بالشرطة
سيبو (ألمانيا) ـ أ ف ب: اتصل طفل في السابعة من عمره
بشرطة سيبو في غرب ألمانيا يستنجد بها ضد أمه التي انتزعت منه
الكريمة المثلجة (الآيس كريم).
وقال مصدر في الشرطة أن الطفل
كوّرَ الخبر وألقى به بعيداً.
عاد للنوم.

Figure 6: *Hadhayān*'s use of images

The images, however, are only the most striking of the diverse textual structures juxtaposed in the novel. A preface (what Gerard Genette would call an example of paratextual convention) by an unknown narrator offers a first glimpse at how textual convention shapes meaning and interpretation.

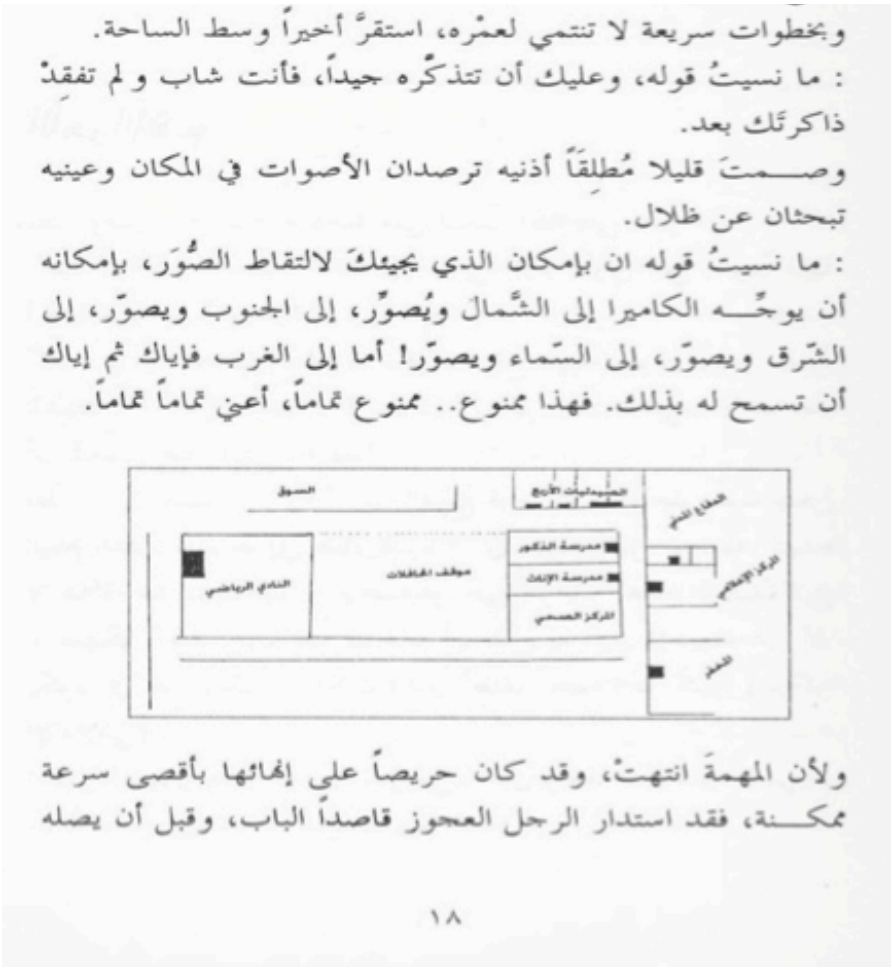
The multiple inter-texts at first alienate a reader, acting as a mechanism of Brechtian estrangement, "something to be watched and judged critically."[41] Instead of immersing within the narrative of *Hadhayān,* each of its inter-texts must be scrutinized, and their conventions revealed. It is only once the parameters of what each inter-text is *meant* to do are identified that its role in the narrative can be discerned. When images and other inter-texts are encountered, precisely because they make no initial 'sense' within the narrative, a reader is forced to question how the image, the excerpt, the clipping, or the poem 'should' be read. At times, the context within which the inter-text is situated provides enough information to 'read' the meaning of the text with an alternative set of conventions. At other times, a reader must reach into his or her own experienced past, cultural knowledge, or to the realm of international politics in order to locate a context within which the inter-text was initially situated. This extra-context is then brought into the novel, and put to service in telling the story of Rashīd. This critical position means a readers' attention is drawn to the conventions of the many texts, and begins to reveal the structures that invisibly guide not only the inter-texts, but also the social texts within which Rashīd moves, and indeed the novel within which his story is told. As a novel framed by the quest of a

government employee to understand the rules of his job, as well as the rules of the house, and the rules of the neighbourhood, *Hadhayān* teaches how it is that narrative structures are in fact part of the story they contain.

So when the authoritative voice of the preface—which reads as a combination of oracle and conspiracy theorist—delivers a dire warning about an emerging middle class society, there is an assumption that the text to follow will somehow bear out or illuminate the warning. The subsequent chapters open onto jarringly normal scenes of domestic life, where settings shift without explanation or preamble. Just when narrative seems to settle into a comfortable pace, a long prose-poem-dream-sequence intervenes complete with illustrations, appearing again without preamble, comment, or narrative cues: a sea of signifiers with no frame or key with which to interpret them. As the novel develops, it incorporates newspaper clippings, radio broadcasts, screenplays, images of fine art, maps, sketches, and cartoon stills. Each of the inter-texts function to call attention to textual conventions, and the laws of narrative that see meaning produced through particular and pre-determined ways in different genres of text.

One of the simplest examples comes in the form of a map, which appears in the novel as Rashīd begins his first day of work as a government information officer. Chapter one of *Hadhayān* opens on Rashīd heading off to his first day of work. His job, like many government information officers, is to welcome journalists and then give them access to limited sorts of information. As part of his training, the outgoing information officer tells Rashīd, "Journalists will visit you to take pictures of the place, and I'm warning you, don't allow any of them to go on to the roof to take pictures." He goes on, saying that when journalists come, they "can take pictures from the left, […] to the south, to the east, to the sky, but not to the west. It is on you, it is on you to tell them, because it is forbidden, expressly forbidden, expressly expressly" (20). Rashīd is thus handed down the rules (or the conventions) of the office and the expectations as to how he will perform his role there. Already primed to wonder about who is giving directions and why thanks to the preface, the reader is able to question, along with Rashīd, just what is behind the command to 'not look west.' With a walk around the office area, the inclusion of a hand-drawn map, and a constant questioning of the conventions of the office, Rashīd's grappling with the confusing system puts it into an inter-textual relationship with the other texts that work to explain it.

By learning to read the office system as a text, and –as we shall see—the map as a system, the imposed structure of office rules are discerned, and in many ways overcome. The office system and its conventions provide an easy first example of the process by which intertextuality reveals structures of narrative as structures of power, and spurs an inter-textual reading of the interactions of these new variety of texts.



وبخطوات سريعة لا تنتمي لعمْره، استقرَّ أخيراً وسط الساحة.
: ما نسيتُ قوله، وعليك أن تتذكّره جيداً، فأنت شاب و لم تفقدْ ذاكرتَك بعد.
وصـــمتَ قليلا مُطلقاً أذنيه ترصدان الأصوات في المكان وعينيه تبحثان عن ظلال.
: ما نسيتُ قوله ان بإمكان الذي يجيئكَ لالتقاط الصُّوَر، بإمكانه أن يوجّـــه الكاميرا إلى الشَّمال ويُصوِّر، إلى الجنوب ويصوّر، إلى الشّرق ويصوّر، إلى السّماء ويصوّر! أما إلى الغرب فإياك ثم إياك أن تسمح له بذلك. فهذا ممنوع.. ممنوع تماماً، أعني تماماً تماماً.

ولأن المهمةَ انتهتْ، وقد كان حريصاً على إنهائها بأقصى سرعة ممكـــنة، فقد استدار الرجل العجوز قاصداً الباب، وقبل أن يصله

١٨

Figure 7: The map as it is rendered in *Hadhayān*

In *Hadhayān*, the hand-drawn map comes right after the outgoing information officer gives the command "but not to the west." The map [Figure 7] presents a diagram of an office building, surrounded by a city scene. There is no mention of the map in the body of the text; it simply appears as if to confirm the instructions of the job. On the map itself, there are no navigational markings indicating which direction is west, there is no legend to indicate which are streets and which are buildings, and there is no title to confirm that this is in fact a representation of Rashīd's office. These elements, however, are implied; they

are precisely the set of conventions that are (at first) unquestioningly applied in order to garner meaning. So, north is assumed to be the top of the map, and from there, the west of the Information Office (the middle labelled building on the far right quadrant of the map) can be identified as a block of three buildings: a boys' school, a girls' school and a health centre. Beyond the school complex (reading right-to-left, again a convention) are a bus stop and then a sports centre. In plotting the buildings on a street map, the sketch allows the reader to see directly what Rashīd and his predecessor narrate.

The map puts in visual form what had been described through prose, and significantly gives readers a different way of accessing the scene. When a conventional reading of the map does not yield any more information, however, the instinct is to apply different modes of reading; otherwise, why include the image? Perhaps the map is a mirror image; perhaps it has purposefully been placed on a different axis? The question becomes for the reader: how to go about 'reading' the map so that it adds information? Should it be read left-to-right instead? What about 'backwards,' as if somehow produced in the work as a mirror image. Later, the chapter narrates as Rashīd takes a walk around the office building. This additional input adds little, noting that the only remarkable thing Rashīd finds on his walk that has not already been mentioned, is the "smell of urine"[42] in one of the back alleyways. Seeing nothing that will give logic to the 'rules' of the job, Rashīd seems forced to blindly adopt its rules. In using the map and Rashīd's narrative to help interpret the 'rules' that Rashīd has been given, we are reading inter-textually: one text (and its conventions) is being read against another, trying to either help understand and even undermine the first.

A flip of the page brings one of the novel's richest examples of inter-textuality, a cacophony of writing styles and two images, all presented by an unknown narrator. The chapter is written entirely in verse, with each stanza making a declaration attributed to an unknown narrator. While it is the first chapter to make use of verse as a narrative device, it is not the last. The poem, introduced right after Rashīd takes an afternoon nap, conjures a dream world. It occupies the entirety of the third chapter, which is obscurely titled "Fluttering wings." The first stanza reads:

> Who has never before heard the fluttering of birds' wings
> Has never chased gusts of wind through city alleyways
> Doesn't know the taste of a kiss until after 30

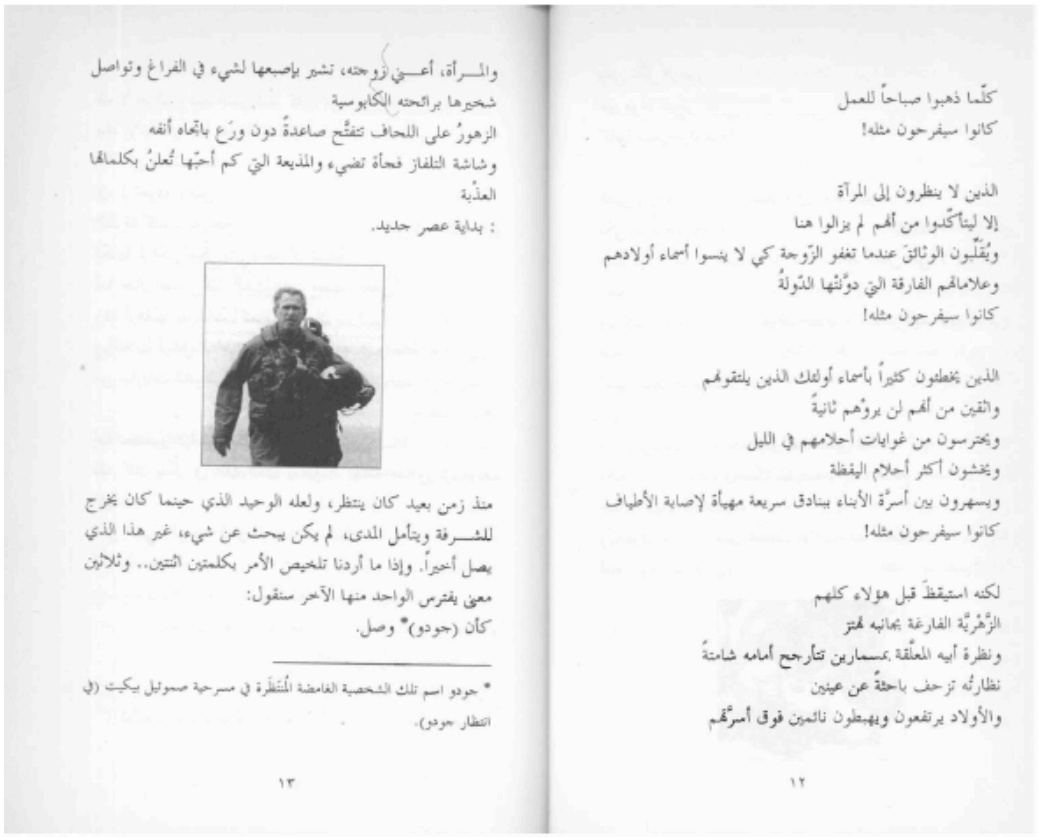
They would rejoice like him. (12)

The poem's language is highly symbolic; its lines produce a lament of inexperience, calling in the absence of love for the touch of a lover, the thrill of adventure. It produces the sense of a shelter, if not a prison, where the pleasures of life are unavailable. After a few stanzas, it becomes clear that the poem is about Rashīd. Though there is no information in the rest of the novel about his experiences with love or adventure, his general naivety and haplessness do not make the idea of an inexperienced protagonist seem strange. The stanzas continue with the same tone, as if an omniscient narrator is making declarations about Rashīd, or someone like him.

But who is the narrator? What is his/her relationship to Rashīd? How does the poet know the information that is coming forth, and within what context is it meant to be read? With no clues given in the lines of the poem itself, literary tradition—to its conventions—suggests a way forward. In classical Arabic biography, both poetry and dream narrative function "as messages from outside […] that act as portents of the future or as authoritative testimony."[43] Read as such, the poem offers insight "from outside" onto the nature or meaning of Rashīd and his experiences. It is another authoritative voice proclaiming something about the meaning of the narrative using inter-texts. The dream-poem goes on, narrating slightly less general observations that seem to apply to Rashīd's home life, hinting at the timid relationship between the protagonist and his wife, with comments like "whoever looks for a woman only to make sure she is not there" (14), which builds on the figure (presumably Rashīd) who "didn't know the taste of a kiss until after 30." Even as the poem-dream begins to take on a pattern, yet another text is used to thwart an easy reading. Seemingly illustrating another line that makes comment on his home life, "Hiding with the experience of the tired the remnants of stolen smiles in front of *Tom and Jerry*" (13), is a still from the classic kids cartoon. Though easy to ignore under the pretext that the image simply illustrates the poem, a second image demands a more complex interpretation of the multiple jostling forms.

After a half dozen stanzas, the dream ends abruptly. The verse, however, continues if a little less regularly, and deviating in its original pattern. The same unknown narrator observes that Rashīd "woke up before all of these flowers could bloom," acknowledging the undeveloped ideas that the poem brought into the text, and hinting that these poetic

suggestions will "bloom" later on in the text. The verses continue to narrate as Rashīd wakes, and explain what he thinks as his conscious mind mulls over events of the day. They are presented in Figure 8, which shows an image of the two pages that follow the close of the dream-poem:



كلّما ذهبوا صباحاً للعمل
كانوا سيفرحون مثله!

الذين لا ينظرون إلى المرآة
إلا ليتأكّدوا من أنهم لم يزالوا هنا
ويُقلّبون الوثائقَ عندما تغفو الزّوجة كي لا ينسوا أسماء أولادهم
وعلاماتهم الفارقة التي دوّنتها الدّولةُ
كانوا سيفرحون مثله!

الذين يخطئون كثيراً بأسماء أولئك الذين يلتقونهم
واثقين من أنهم لن يروْهم ثانيةً
ويخترسون من غوايات أحلامهم في الليل
ويخشون أكثر أحلام اليقظة
ويسهرون بين أسرّة الأبناء بمنادق سريعة مهيأة لإصابة الأهداف
كانوا سيفرحون مثله!

لكنه استيقظَ قبل هؤلاء كلهم
الزّهْريّة الفارغة بجانبه تهتز
ونظرة أبيه المعلّقة بمسمارين تتأرجح أمامه شامتةً
نظارتُه تزحف باحثةً عن عينين
والأولاد يرتفعون ويهبطون نائمين فوق أسرّتهم

١٢

والمـــرآة، أعـــين زوجته، تشير بإصبعها لشيء في الفراغ وتواصل
شخيرها برائحته الكابوسية
الزهورُ على اللحاف تتفتّح صاعدةً دون ورَع باتجاه أنفه
وشاشة التلفاز فجأة تضيء والمذيعة التي كم أحبّها تُعلنُ بكلماتها
العذْبة
: بداية عصر جديد.

منذ زمن بعيد كان ينتظر، ولعله الوحيد الذي حينما كان يخرج
للشـــرفة ويتأمل المدى، لم يكن يبحث عن شيء، غير هذا الذي
يصل أخيراً. وإذا ما أردنا تلخيص الأمر بكلمتين اثنتين.. وثلاثين
معنى يفترس الواحد منها الآخر سنقول:
كأن (جودو)* وصل.

* جودو اسم تلك الشخصية الغامضة المُنتظَرة في مسرحية صموئيل بيكيت (في انتظار جودو).

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Figure 8: Layout of verse, images, and footnote in *Hadhayān*

Within the second stanza to narrate Rashīd's thoughts, is an embedded image. This image forces a reader again to the question of who the narrator is, and how they intend the image to be read. The photograph of former US President George W. Bush disembarking from a fighter jet ahead of his 2003 "Mission Accomplished" speech punctuates the following lines:

> And the broadcaster that he loved announced, in terrifying words:
> The start of a new era:
>  (15)

While the image of Tom and Jerry had seemed to provide a visual reference point for the mention of the cartoon in the poem, the correlation between the words and the image in the second instance beg the question: how to read an illustrated poem in the pages of a novel?[44] To start, an answer must look at the conventions of the photograph.

When encountering a still image, Barthes says in his *Camera Lucida* that the viewer is given direct access to a scene. The encounter with this scene includes the knowledge that it is created through a lens controlled by one individual, as direct but at the same time mediated access to that which is pictured.[45] A photo, Barthes explains, is in this way "a temporal hallucination,"[46] because it at once documents an event with a fixed moment and place, but is a reproduction that can be viewed anywhere at any moment by anyone. Photographs "produce both knowledge and experience. They are not only records of a frozen past; they are also placed in contemporary contexts."[47] The past becomes present, read within and alongside a different age, to say nothing of a different geography. The systems and structures that shaped that past and invisibly crafted the image are likewise being read—along with the image—into the 'present' scene and all of its invisible structures. The notion that the photograph represents a confusion of time, a mélange of past and present, and layers of systems into which the information of the image is being read, very much expresses what the photographs, and to a large extent each of the visual inter-texts in *Hadhayān* represent. Layered on to this is the question of the meaning of the image in the first place.

This has become question much posed by scholars in today's world of digital media, where the reproduction of photographs is not only simple but, but where photographs have become more integrated into international means of storytelling. In their introduction to a special issue volume of *Poetics Today*, Silke Horstkotte and Nancy Pedri commented on the complex role of the image as art, testimony, and evidence. They wrote, "Because of the photograph's persistent use as documentary evidence, the presence of photography in literature almost automatically challenges accepted distinctions between fiction and nonfiction."[48] Within the text, then, is image fact or continued fiction? Does it operate with the authority of a footnote or give the guidance of a preface, or perhaps it functions as a complex example of the intertext, as a sort of quotation? In *Hadhayān*, this series of almost inevitable questions creates a critical position for the reader, who is forced to interrogate

the parameters of fiction, and eventually the conventions that are embedded within it. The use of images in *Hadhayān* has an effect similar to how critics see the use of images in the works of German writer W.G. Sebald. Making use of photographs, scrapbook cuttings, and memorabilia, his novels *Vertigo*, *The Emigrants*, and *Austerlitz* (among others) make use inter-texts to explore the trauma and present-past of WWII in Europe.[49] The mixed-media novels are said to "call for an integrative reading"[50] of the presented information. In asking a reader to interpret an image and integrate the two systems of telling, Sebald's critics suggest, the boundaries between the image and the text are dissolved.

To read the image, then, a host of personal, news archive, and political memory banks must be activated. In this case, a reader must identify the image as the photograph taken as the end of the American combat mission in Iraq, declared in 2003. At the precise moment of the shot, Bush was disembarking from a fighter jet that had landed on a US aircraft carrier in the Gulf. He went on to declare the start of a "new era" in front of a banner proclaiming "Mission Accomplished" in front of a crowed of gathered troops. It is up to the reader to reach out of the novel for this context, bringing with them their own memories of the news event, and the 'real-time' or 'historical' effect that the news had. All at once, then, a reader must recall the news (the first time the image was encountered), the past of the self (where one was when they saw the image/heard the news), the memory of both. These each jostle with the context of the poem within *Hadhayān*, and must be made sense of in order to realize a reading of the image. The many levels of analysis are taken together—read-in to each other—in the reader's process of interpretation. It is this conversation between elements that is then put back into the text as the story; which becomes a sort of conglomerate 'whole.' This 'whole' incudes the experience of reading an image into the stanza of a poem, and using that frame to then go on and interpret the rest of the dream sequence.

It is only with this context, external to the information given in the novel, that the image and its place in the poem make sense. Part of and separate from the poem's narrator, the image too acts as a "voice from outside," but this time it is a multiplicity of voices, and the sum of a political speech, its representations and ramifications. Context from the image brings to the poem the political atmosphere within which Rashīd lives, and which forms the invisible background to his life and actions. The context of the image links it back to the

text, moreover, showing the absolute necessity for this context in the process of interpretation. A reader well versed in the news headlines of the early millennium would know that the "new era" line in the poem refers to what Bush called in his speech the supposed end of a US combat mission in Iraq. Speaking to cameras and the assembled military personnel, Bush commented, "In the images of fallen statues we have witnessed the arrival of a new era,"[51] signified by the fall of Saddam Hussein, the occupation of Iraq, and the 'new era' of American military intervention in the region. The uncertainty with which Rashīd faces life at home and at the office take on a new significance when understood in the context of an entire Middle East that has supposedly entered a "new era." Rashīd's attempts at making sense of the map, then, can be seen as a parallel to his unconscious attempts to make sense of the "new era," which the "voice from outside" inserts into the dream-poem to give a double context. The narrator of the poem and the broadcaster on the radio, the transmitted speech that Rashīd overhears, all work to conjure a particular context within which Rashīd operates, and create connections between the layers of information. These are the building blocks of the inter-textual imaginary.

The image, the poem, and the radio broadcast, however, are only three of the inter-texts that the third chapter of the novel includes. Following the embedded image, the stanza continues:

> For a long time he [Rashīd] was waiting, and maybe he alone would
> contemplate the new term [Bush's]. When he went outside on the
> balcony, he wasn't looking for anything, except that which would arrive eventually. And if we were to categorize the situation in two words … and three meanings
> He would pray the last of them and we would say:
> As though Godot[1] arrived (15)

Referenced, is Samuel Beckett's famous 1953 play *Waiting for Godot*, which is in turn footnoted at the bottom of the same page with the gloss: "1- The name of that awesome character that waits in the play by Samuel Beckett 'Waiting for Godot'" (15). For these additional inter-texts, interpretation relies on a similar process of identifying the form and the function of the conventions of the text (various modes of citation), along with their context within the poem, and then the content of the texts. The footnote is what Genette would call a paratext, and offers yet another narrative authority to the cacophony. It draws further attention to the question of the authority "from outside" that delivers the poem; is it

this same 'authority' that has glossed Godot as "the name of that awesome character"? The information given in the footnote, by virtue of it being delivered through a footnote, assumes a kind of factual authority.[52] This assumption again draws attention the relationship between textual form and its interpretation.

Inter-textual writing like the dream-poem, its footnotes and images, as Barthes reflects, "systematically exploit [] the ambiguity of the photograph between proof of the stories' authenticity, on the one hand, and the photographs as part of an elaborate play with interdiscursive (intertextual, intermedial, and intericonic) allusions, on the other."[53] The result of such textual interplay "reveals the notion of authenticity to be a hoax."[54] The conventions of the different inter-texts suggest they are voices of authority, from the narrator of the poem, to the first-hand image of Bush and his real-life speech, and the scientific footnote that lends weight to the claim that "it was as though Godot had arrived." Where form suggests truth and authority, however, the function of the texts in the story of Rashīd are questioned, their conventions become curious, even suspect. The question of authority, of authenticity, when it comes to narrative structures, and indeed Rashīd's experience, becomes a central problem of the novel.

In order to read *Hadhayān*, interpretation must somehow take into account the fact of narrative forms and their various modes and mechanisms of authority. As in Sebald, inter-texts intervene in narrative structure by "shaping the very forms of organization by which each subject constructs reality for him/herself."[55] Likewise, the radical inter-textuality of *Hadhayān* disrupts this organization to such an extent that all forms come into question. So, where *Ṭifl* had worked to reveal structures of power as entities operating as architexts, but its protagonist ultimately failed to learn how to read these alongside his own story, *Hadhayān* is finally able to show a reader how to read inter-textually. Here, structures no longer guide reading, but must themselves be 'read' in order to tell the story.

In this way, narrative structures and their modes of authority are identified and unpacked through the process of reading. In becoming part of the story of Rashīd al-Nimr, these once invisible structures become part of the story. Structures of power are thus subsumed within narrative, and the very nature of the invisible structures that guide narrative forms is made plain. Also important in the developing logic of an inter-textual Palestine, however, is an

understanding of the way that narrative forms impose limitations on the imagination. While *Hadhayān* had forced a reading of textual conventions and the necessity of reading them into a story, just how problematic narrative forms can be does not become clear until the publication of the third of the *Shurafāt*, which looks at the unsettling similarities between narrative and social structures of power. When the form of a story mimics the form of a social structure, the violence of both is revealed.

Violent limitations

Written over the backdrop of Israel's 21-day war on Gaza between December and January 2008-9, *Shurfat al-ʿār* [Balcony of Disgrace] (2010) was penned amid the onslaught, and published the following year. It takes place in a non-descript city, and follows Manār, its protagonist and heroine, who begins life as the hope of her family, and dies having been abducted by a man seeking vengeance on her brother, raped, refused an abortion, imprisoned by the state, abused by her guards, raped by a fellow inmate, and finally shot dead by her brother as "the windows and balconies filled with hundreds of shadows looking out over the street" (233). As the story of the young woman's tragedy unfolds the war on Gaza rages on, almost but never quite invisibly in the background. The story of Manār and the structures that impose their own priorities on her life thus becomes the story of Gaza. The death in both stories reveals the utter failure of power to protect the vulnerable. With Manār, as with Gaza, the structures of government, tradition, and the global middle class imprisoned her to such an extent that no efforts could prevent the violence exacted on her; violence no one wanted, and no one stopped. The novel makes plain the culpability of structures of power in the death of Manār, and uses narrative techniques to reveal the mechanisms by which they curtail and delimit what is possible.

Although Manār is the protagonist of the novel, and its story is most immediately one of her death, in order to explain what happened *al-ʿĀr* must at the same time tell the story of three structures of power. Distinct in their aims and value sets, these structures of power, when they are inevitably exercised, repeat the same restricting, delimiting, and even imprisoning violence on the heroine, be they textual or social structures. Just as the national novel and the European imaginary of the nation-state mirrored each other as closed and bounded texts, the structures of power that Manār encounters are also closed and bounded. Instead of one "modularized" structure of power, however, family, class, and state represent

three different but mirrored power structures, which when they operate simultaneously only amplify the problems of the others. These come to represent, through narrative form, closed structures that Manār is trapped within.

The celebrated only daughter of an aspiring middle-class family, her father's hard work and dreams for her success initially make it seem as though all roads are open to her. In the early chapters Manār thrives; attending university, falling in love with a fellow student, and finding her calling in the field of social work, which she chooses as her career. What becomes apparent when Manār hits a crisis point, however, is that she had been seamlessly navigating what are really separate spheres. Enmeshed in their invisible codes, it is only when things go wrong that the structures close in on her, and she becomes entirely trapped. Represented as closed narrative loops that begin and end in the same place, each chapter is as a sovereign system that insists on 'reading' Manār according to its own norms and parameters. The structures, by virtue of being closed, double down on their strict limitations just when Manār needs them to support her despite transgressing their borders. The structures operate with their own logic, and are unresponsive to the lives and deaths of those who live within them. As if machines, they police their bounded parameters, regardless of what is damaged in the process. Though she is claimed by the family, class, and state structures represented in the novel—indeed, perhaps *because* she is claimed—their boundedness means they operate to sustain themselves, to maintain their own structure, rather than to preserve their members.

Divided into four parts, each quarter of the novel comes to represent [Figure 9] one of the structures that frame and play a key role in the abuse and ultimate killing of Manār. With each part divided into a dozen or so chapters, which are in turn divided into scenes, the scene that opens each part also closes it, in minor variations of the following:

	Part						
	First chapter	2	3	4	5	Etc	Last chapter
Determining scene →	Scene **J-** K L M N						Scene F G H I **J+** ←

Figure 9: The prison of closed structures

The parts of the novel work so that the snippet of a scene which opens the first chapter of each part (**J-**) is repeated verbatim at near the end of the last chapter (**J+**), where it appears with additional details (**+**). Scene **J** is thus set up as the culmination of events in each part of the novel, which proceed as if pre-determined. While each part presents either family, the state, or class as structures that can save Manār, or give her a place to flourish, each repeat the same closed loop; each starts and finishes with the pre-determined scene (**J**). First family offers her a place to thrive, then the middle class, and when she is attacked by her brother the state intervenes and claims its authority (and ability) to save her from these other structures. It fails, however, and only ends up incarcerating the now pregnant victim of rape, as the only way the structure can see fit to protect the young woman. From here, it is as a battle of the structures of power. The middle class proves too weak to extricate her from the situation, and it is left to the entrenched family network to liberate her from the women's prison. The family structure does this, however, only to ensure that Manār is killed for staining their honour.

The four parts of the novel represent discrete bounded texts in Kristeva's sense of the term, where each sets out the limits of their own epistemology, explores the possibilities available within the structure, but ultimately confirms—indeed must confirm—the assumptions about possibilities laid out in their opening pages. The inevitable overlap in their operation of power over the same individual gives space for the transgression of their structures at the same time as it makes Manār vulnerable to the limits of each. Take, for example, the scene that both opens and closes part one of the novel. On the surface, it is a scene of celebration, where Manār's father rejoices at his daughter's graduation from university. By the time the scene is repeated at the close of part one, however, it becomes clear that it was laden with cues foretelling of the failure of the family structure to keep her safe from harm.

> Manār smiled and wept with great joy when she saw him approach the small room in his wheelchair.
> The women and the singers opened up a path for him, as tears streamed into his smile.
> He arrived at the doorway, the wheelchair stopped, and holding the edge of the doorframe he tried to stand; his wife put her hand out to help him, but he moved it away kindly, looked at her, and solemnly shook his head.

> That day he danced in front of her like a young boy… (9/75)

Later it becomes clear that Abū ʾAmīn's injury is what has taken Manār out of his individual sphere of influence, and at the mercy of a wider family structure. This is foreshadowing. As the celebration continues, the narrator describes Manār's father warding off the glares of his brothers, and remembering how he had "refused, with purpose, to marry her at the first request of the relatives, [having] persisted with the answer 'the girl is young!' until his five brothers [all] cursed him" (10). The section continues by outlining the pressure of the family to have ʿAbū ʾAmīn and his daughter Manār conform to the expectations of the group, with the narrator mentioning that the five brothers "saw in Manār the most beautiful and polite match for their sons" (10). Graduation from university had gone against the wishes of the extended family, a tension that would prove fatal.

The scene of celebration thus reveals much more than a young woman, beloved of her father, graduating from university. It sets out the family norms within which Manār has grown up, and which both she and her father have struggled within to find a path acceptable to those norms whereby Manār could gain an education. The conventions of the family are quietly laid out, and in the final scene of the chapter, as the celebration winds down, the problem of ʿAbū Amin's injury—as the father who has fought hard to create the world he wanted for his daughter amid family expectations—is foreshadowed.

> That night, Umm ʾAmīn approached and lifted the dangling leg of her husband toward the bed. A flicker of sadness passed across her face, a flicker that the darkness couldn't hide, and she heard him say: "Did you see how I returned to my poor legs like new again, do you know, it was impossible for me to stop dancing!" (11/76)

Having been confined to a wheelchair some time before due to a back injury, ʿAbū ʾAmīn was so happy to celebrate his daughter that he got out of the chair and danced, somehow overcoming the pain that had forced him to retire from his taxi driving business. The "flicker of sadness" juxtaposed with ʿAbū ʾAmīn's glowing pride betrays his wife's knowledge of the problem that her husband has created. In fighting to create a space within the family structure for an educated daughter, in being able to provide that education but no longer able to fight to keep that space open, an educated Manār is left to negotiate the family structure on her own. With her lazy and entitled elder brother ʾAmīn now at the head

of the family, her father's vision—that "This girl will learn, and graduate and I will raise my head by her" (10)—no longer carries any weight.

Although a scene of celebration, its repetition is ominous, imprisoning the narrative of part one between its first and last chapters. It provides in form what the rest of the novel will relate in plot: the limitation of possibilities for Manār. While her father had worked so hard to open the road ahead, the repetition of the first scene symbolically closes it. The worried reference to her father's injury, and the brief period of dancing in celebration of temporary success, only to return back to the chair signifies in effect his inability to maintain his dream. The bounded chapters, bookending the sections of the novel, have laid out everything that will precipitate Manār's catastrophe, as well as painted the outlines of the family structure that she will be left to manage on her own.

The opening of the second part of the novel is much more ominous, and with it the closed loop of the narrative—no longer just a problematic celebration—comes across as limiting and violent. It starts and ends with Manār's return home in the middle of her eldest brother's scandalous marriage to a second wife, her dress ripped and face tear-stained (83). Neither reader nor ʾAmīn understand why Manār is crying, but the intervening chapters once again explain how the scene came to pass. Manār has been abducted by Yūnis and raped, as the tensions set up in part one come to a head. As a taxi driver, ʿAbū ʾAmīn had been able to placate the family's concerns about Manār being outside of the neighbourhood (and thus outside of their 'protection') by driving her to school and picking her up at the end of the day. With his injury and ʾAmīn's failure to obtain the license, a stranger (Yūnis) is leased the car, and asked to drive Manār to and from university as part of the lease agreement. The following pages backtrack to duly report the developments of her relationship with ʿIsām her university boyfriend, which will not prevent her now inevitable rape by Yūnis. It also sees her take on the case –as a young social worker— of a young woman raped by her brother, who kills herself when she discovers she is pregnant, at once revealing Manār's optimism for change, and revealing the existence of a family structure that leaves few options when violence befalls them. With the violence done, no matter what happens in the chapters between, Manār ends up on the doorstep to her home in tears.

The third section repeats the same formula. It begins with Manār's Uncle Salīm hanging a black banner on the home of the family, and then backtracks to look closely at the events around Manār's rape and subsequent pregnancy. In it, the state is very plainly shown to mimic the family structure, with police barging into Manār's home after an argument, and promising to protect her from ʾAmīn, saying, "we are here for her protection (*hamayatha*)" (179) and forcibly take her into custody. The section ends with the same scene where Salīm marches up the front steps and announces "I hope to god there is a man in this house to rise up and protect their honour" (105). The problem with Salīm, of course, is that ʿAbū ʾAmīn had refused his request to marry their children, and he aims to take the family down a notch by drawing attention to the attack on Manār, and indeed ʿAbū ʾAmīn's inability to prevent it. The image of the exhausted father at his daughter's graduation party, the scene of a crying Manār returning home to her brother's second wedding, and the foreboding installation of the black banner above her door all work as indelible and unmoveable markers in her life, standing as though pre-determined, retrospectives, bounded.

Where the novel sets out distinct closed narrative loops to symbolize the function of the power structures, the structures themselves—like the plot of the novel—are indelibly intertwined. From the start, the emergence of a leisure class system that allows ʿAbū ʾAmīn to dream of sending his daughter to university puts the goals of the family in tension with those of the bourgeoisie. While ʿAbū ʾAmīn declares that his daughter will "learn, and graduate and I will raise my head by" (10) her accomplishments, she is also the physical means by which Yūnis is able to get even with ʾAmīn, who out of petty jealousy of Yūnis—he himself could not drive the taxi because he consistently failed the driving test—cheats him out of a substantial sum of cash on the pretext that it is for surgery for his mother. When ʾAmīn finally passes his city licence exam and will inherit the taxi business taking it away from Yūnis, the driver accosts Manār downtown, on a date with ʿIsām, and admonishes her for being "in this area so far from the house without telling [anyone], and the sun will set shortly!" (103). Using the family structure that class had allowed him to access, he takes his revenge, and insists on bringing Manār home, but rapes her first. Family and class structures are thus intertwined, even though they both close in and separate when challenged. ʿIsām, for his part, is too weak to challenge the family structure, saying simply "thanks, my road is different" (103) when Manār begs him to come with her

in Yūnis' taxi; but Uncle Salīm is able to take advantage of his brother's illness and Manār's tragedy to assert power in the family realm.

In mirroring the family structure, the state's imprisonment of Manār comes to reinforce the symbol of the closed and indeed confining realities of each of family, class, and state. Couched in the language of the family structure—also meant to protect Manār—the state steps in as proposed guardian, offering to defend Manār from her male relatives and offer her shelter. Parroting the same value set as the family structure, state control over Manār guarantees her about as much 'protection' as the family had. Once under their control, Manār is fed through a social services system that resembles a prison. Protection has become confinement, just as it had been under the family structure, and the possibility of ensuring the safety of those who do not hold power within the structure equally impossible. Refusing to participate in the state structure and reinforcing the idea of the simultaneous and bounded loops of narrative, none of the family will testify against ʾAmīn so that he might be put in prison for his apparent threat to Manār's life. Even though Manār's nuclear family had been ready and willing to create a new set of rules within which she might succeed in terms outside of the family, state, or middle class frameworks, they were unwilling to challenge these structures to their breaking points.

With the family refusing to subsume itself to the state structure, the police decide it is unsafe for Manār to return home. She is told she will be kept in a safe house, but when Manār sees the facility she realizes that it is a women's prison. Disgusted at the conditions, and fearful for her own safety, she tells the guards "I will not agree to go in there" (184), but the guard dismiss her concerns asking, "Why? Are you more honourable than them?" (184) before ordering her to strip and be washed, once again using honour to control a perceived subject. Prison, as a representation of the state system, curtails all aspects of Manār's life, subjecting her and the other prisoners to its conventions, and controlling every aspect of life. Rising when the lights go on, eating when fed, exercising when permitted, the prison reads on to Manār its own vision of life, of normalcy, of the pattern of a day, an "exercise a power of normalization."[56] The women's prison, as Foucault described in his *Discipline and Punish,* is for *al-ʿĀr*'s state structure "the place for individual transformation that would restore to the state the subject it had lost."[57] Where the family and middle class structures had sought to imprison Manār, it is the state structure that does

so literally. Given the mirroring of each structure within the narrative form of the novel however, the limitations and modes of oppression used by one structure can be read into and understood as operating in each of the others as well. Each of the structures thus replicates its others in their modes of dominance and exercise of power. Each, at the same time, is intertwined with its others, linked through complex social practice and reused symbol.

The structure of the novel creates a narrative framework representing the world that Manār moves within: repeated closed loops that, while each operates with a different starting point, enact in form and function the same limitations, and manifest the same prison. These narrative loops symbolize the closed nature of the power structures that 'narrate' Manār, and represent a structural impossibility of escape from bounded texts. The structures quite literally compose the story of Manār, and to read her story is to read how each of these pre-determined elements allows her story to move forward, or to end abruptly. Her story is, then, also the story of the structures that have dictated its parameters. In being able to see each of the four structures, readers gain access to the balconic view, and thus an understanding of how multiple structures create and contain a story. The story of Manār is contained by these narrative and indeed social structures, so that the story of her life and death is as much one of the problem (and mechanisms) of containment as it is of the protagonist herself. It is thus that Foucault's "rules," of the episteme are revealed. A once invisible episteme, architexts "beyond [the rules] of grammar and logic, which operate beneath the consciousness of individual subjects and define a system of conceptual possibilities that determines the boundaries of thought in a given domain,"[58] can be read-in to a Palestinian story, instead of containing it.

Once absorbed into the Palestine project, structures and texts become integral to the cartography of Palestine. The violence of the text, though extended on Manār, becomes part of rather than the parameters of a Palestinian story. The struggle against the nation-state paradox and the assumptions about narrative and the ways of imagining a national community that this paradox entails is thus codified structurally within an inter-textual imaginary. That violence, however, is not static. A text is constructed through a process of narrative that relies on modes of telling and micro-conventions that guide the movement of plot or the development of ideas. Understanding text-as-process and just how it is that texts

are able to create meaning, is a question developed in both series, in particular through their use of cinematic inter-texts. Works of the Palestine project use the device of the moving image, and available understanding about how movies tell stories, to push an inter-textual imagination, and in particular thinking about the process of manipulation that goes into crafting narrative.

Text as process

An iconic moment in cinema, a white feather floats from a blue sky with cotton candy clouds, the camera following its descent, the viewer wondering what winds blow it across the landscape, and curious as to where it will land. It soars and falls until it lands by the foot of the film's protagonist Forrest Gump, and into the dream of *Hadhayān*'s Rashīd al-Nimr.


يـــنعطف برشاقة استثنائية كما لو أنه طائرة حربية فائقة التطور
ويهبط كسهم ضامّاً جناحيه وقبل أن يصل إلى جواره بمسافة متر
واحد، على الأكثر، يفرد جناحيه ويهبط بنعومة تلك الريشة التي
هبطتْ على حذاء (فورست غامب) في ذلك الفيلم الشهير.

كانت العصافير تقف إلى جانبه بانتظام عجيب، مثل طابور فائق
الانضباط تنتظر إشارة منه..
أو هكذا خُيِّل إليه..

Figure 10: Still from *Forrest Gump* as it appears in *Hadhayān*

The cinematic inter-text prompts wondering about the significance of the feather, and initiates a broader discussion about narrative process; a questioning of the "logic" driving structures, and the continuous movement implied in the very idea of that 'drive.' By bringing in the device of the cinema, the novel is harnessing the technology of storytelling. If cinema is a form of narrative "shaping the very forms of organization by which each subject constructs reality for him/herself,"[59] than its use in the Palestine project may

provide a key to reading the alternative forms of organization around which the Palestinian nation is being formed.

Forrest Gump provides an easy entry point into this world of cinema. The familiar story of an innocent boy from the American south who stumbles through life during an age that would shape the nation is twice referenced within *Hadhayān*. The first reference is through the still image, which pictures Gump's foot next to a feather, resting on the ground. The feather is in fact symbolic of one of the film's sub-themes, which uses the devices of the cinema to wonder—through Gump—about whether the world is one ruled by destiny or chaos. The question is about whether a grand (linear) narrative exists, or if events are meaningless, and driven by chaos. As Gump puts it, "I don't know if Mamma was right or if its Lt. Dan, I don't know if we each have a destiny or if we're all just floating around accidental-like on the breeze."[60] Forrest's question is along the same lines of the mission of the Palestine project: to give logic to what seems like chaos, and find alternative frames to read events so that non-linear readings can be extracted from the realm of a hopeless chaos.

The opposition of destiny versus chaos is signified in the feather. A scene in the film, when Gump is sent to fight in Vietnam and saves the life of his commanding officer Dan, creates a useful parallel. The Lieutenant, who had been badly injured in battle, and would return to the United States a paraplegic, is initially furious with his soldier for saving him. He tells Gump that he was meant to die. He explains that he has had a "relative die in every single war in American History," and that Gump has thwarted this larger plan, saying, "We all have a destiny, nothing just happens, it's all part of a plan."[61] But the very narrative that Lt Dan is a part of was initiated by a camera that followed a feather "just floating around accidental-like on the breeze," which forces—at least for the viewer—a questioning of Lt Dan's idea: is the fact of Lt Dan's family history equally a result of chaos? Or perhaps it is rather indicative of a wider theme in American history; a 'destiny' imposed by a particular amalgamation of power structures operating over the character's family.

Hadhayān's answer to the question is to point to the very process of narrative construction. It gives an even broader view to the feather. Though it ends up by Forrest's foot after sailing on the wind, in Rashīd's dream, the feather has fallen out of his own imaginary wings. Dislodged, the feather free-floats for a while, but "before it reached its place by about a meter at the most, he [Rashīd] flapped his wings, and that feather fell smoothly

beside the foot of Forrest Gump, in that famous film" (88). It was neither destiny nor chaos that determined the feather would fall by the foot of Forrest Gump. Rather, it was Rashīd who took control of the process of narrative and guided the feather to his desired location, so that it might initiate the action of the film. With a wider view on the feather, Rashīd's dream implies, the mechanisms that were in fact controlling its descent would have become visible. The question is no longer one of destiny vs. chaos, and instead the re-framed cinematic scene is revealed as one that narrates the process by which a story is told. This process, moreover, is shown to be controlled by concealed forces. Narrative, the dream suggests, is no accident, and nor is it the tracing of a destiny.

Not only can cinema conceal the forces that create narrative, but it also employs visual tactics to shape feeling and guide interpretation. It is not only what is filmed, but also how and through what movements, that results in the creation of a particular idea or sentiment. Playing on the idea of these cinematic devices, *Hadhayān* titles one fascinating chapter "Zoom in … out" (52). The text of the chapter reads as if it were a screenplay, directing set, characters, and viewing angle to produce a desired story. Using the language of the cinema, the chapter narrates a dream as though it were meant to be filmed, and thus draws attention to the process of narrative construction, or how particular events or angles strung together produce a desired effect:

> In the background thick smoke
> In the foreground military vehicles approach, raising dust
> From the sky, cries of victory
> But the eye could not make out the whole scene
> (It reminded him of that scene from *Lawrence of Arabia*) (57)

The chapter continues, narrating part of the "when Lawrence returns from the Sahara"[62] scene from the 1962 *Lawrence of Arabia*.[63] As it continues, readers are told when the 'camera' closes in on different actors and what angle is chosen to access faces, or portray feelings. Likewise when the 'camera' zooms out, the screenplay describes creating a sense of wider action: "the camera moved back/or with that movement that people in the film industry call, "zoom out" (63).

The action of the screenplay assumes three things: that who/whatever is directing the lens knows simultaneously what is going on at a micro and macro level, and that with this knowledge they choose where to point the lens to create a particular (and pre-determined)

effect. The position is said in the screenplay to be "like a balcony" (62); precisely that vantage being developed to enable the imagination of an inter-textual nation. The balcony is also, then, able to cue a reader into the existence of macro and micro devices that construct a scene, not all of which are visible or indeed represented within a narrative. In novels, nations, and videos, then, a story is constructed and the parts that put it together are left out. The cinematic chapter ends when, suddenly, hands block the lens, ending the scene and waking Rashīd from the long dream. Shaking, Rashīd has a moment to reflect and realizes that the hands that had blocked the lens "were, oh the terror, the same as his hands" (63). The interjection of hands into the field of view, combined with the effort to describe the mechanisms of creating a scene, reminds a reader that cinema, like a novel or a photograph or a history, is constructed, mastered by a set of usually invisible hands, and indeed an invisible set of processes.

This idea is built on in *Hadhayān*'s subsequent chapter titled "A long film" (86), where the white feather features alongside video stills from the news coverage of the 9/11 attacks, looking critically at how shocked coverage of mass casualties became the basis for a "war on terror."[64] It is, in essence, an examination of the process of logic-making through narrative. Indeed, the dream and the feather are sandwiched between reports of the 9/11 attacks. On his way home, Rashīd had heard the report on the radio:

> A few minutes into the broadcast, the host announces that he has the reporter from New York on the line. The news was live, and the reporter announced that a small plane had just crashed into the World Trade Tower in New York. (86)

The, when the feather lands in Rashīd's dream and wakes him up, he is brought back into the world of 9/11 news coverage. Walking over to the television, reports of the event are on repeat, "Three hours Rashīd al-Nimr spent in front of the television screen and he repeated, time after time: impossible!!!" (90), whenever he saw the aircraft hitting the towers.

Figure 11: Fall of the World Trade Towers, as reproduced in *Hadhayān*

As if to counter Rashīd's disbelief, his exclamations are followed by a picture or a video still of one of the Twin Towers shortly after the second plane had hit, smoke billowing out. Rashīd watches the event over and over again, and the image is juxtaposed with the floating feather of destiny. Interpretation of the dream and the events demands of the reader an understanding of the very process of narrative construction. Using the same techniques to read *Hadhayān*'s portrayal of 9/11 reveals a process of elaboration, a development of textual conventions that frame the events and turn them into a text; it is watching a developing and fluid logic being codified. When it is first introduced, in the direct-broadcast radio announcement, the host of the broadcast exclaims: "But the crash of two planes into the World Trade Towers can't be a coincidence!" the reporter, who is live, apparently at the scene and following developments, pronounces: "Until now, there is no reason to believe otherwise" (87). Still in its first moments, "the war on terror" did not yet exist,[65] and it was not until later that a 'logic' of the attacks was settled on by mainstream media and political institutions, which largely followed Washington's "particular reading of the opportunities and challenges of globalization" and neo-imperialism.[66] The prevailing American 'reading' of the attacks created a retrospective that posited the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan as a direct-line response to the felling of the Twin Towers.[67]

This narrative became the nucleus of an "urgent global mission of spreading some version of democracy and free-market capitalism. These two factors have led to a policy of trying to control everything, everywhere, all the time."[68] This logic (which becomes convention) is the Beckett-esque waiting for a "new era," which like Godot will never come. As the subsequent treatments of 9/11 in the novel show, the events in New York would come to form the foundation of a discourse, that—like the conventions of Rashīd's office—would become another 'text' of Rashīd's story. Each of these examples works to illustrate the process by which interpretation becomes convention. Just like there are "invisible hands" directing the screenplay of Rashīd's dream, so too are there conventions that dictate social texts, from Rashīd's office to the meta-context of the war on terror, which becomes so pervasive that it is used by both Rashīd, in an argument with his wife, and by Rashīd's son, when he makes the case for a pet dog.

Birds, fate, feathers, Forrest Gump, the "Long Film" of waiting for a "new era," these each go back to the symbol of the feather that falls from Rashīd's dream-wing, and ask hard questions about the process and politics by which narratives come to be. Most crucially, the use of cinema to explore the phenomenon of 9/11 shows both reader and Rashīd the process by which structures and logics come into being. The device is also used in *al-ʿĀr,* which explores the ideology of the class structure through a cinematic intertext as Manār and ʿIsām arrange to go to the theatre to see the 2008 Hollywood movie *There will be Blood*.[69] The film is set in the early days of American prospecting, before the burgeoning federal government had declared sovereignty over the south or Pacific-coast of what is today the United States. Through the story of a money-hungry oil prospector (Daniel) who ends up in a 'blood feud' with his adopted son when the two quarrel over profits, the film is portrays a battle between family ties, religious power, and the desire for capital, each as competing power structures. In the film, oil money wins out and what is established—as Naṣrallāh writes in his own analysis of the film in *Ṣuwar al-Wujūd* (Portraits of Being: Cinematic Reflections)[70] where he devotes a chapter to the film—is a society based on greed where developers will use "any means" to procure oil.[71] The film gives "a picture of the beastliness of the world, that stops at nothing on the road to realizing its ends,"[72] where in the pursuit of "black gold," churches are built and men convert in return for land

purchase, pastors desperate for cash declare that "God is a superstition," and family ties are sacrificed to profit.

That Naṣrallāh reads *There will be Blood* as a foretelling of the damage of a global system of capital based on the search for oil, and makes use of the film inter-textually in *al-ʿĀr* is hardly coincidental. A portrayal of the very naissance of global capital and a new kind of value system, the film is outlining precisely the terms upon which ʿIsām operates, and the conventions of the middle class world into which Manār has entered as she opens doors to the university compound. It is a world, Naṣrallāh writes, in which "there *will* be blood:"

> Not the blood that is referenced in the title, rather the blood that will flow thickly is outside the film, with the start of a new phase in the life of capitalism.[73]

This new leisure class, driven by an oil economy "grows in a way we could not have imagined" and grows according to the logic of oil.[74] In this system, Naṣrallāh writes, there is "no place for weak people:"

> Nothing inhibits it, not ethics, not religion, and now the law, because it has placed itself over these things together and exchanged for absolute power, the intolerance of rivals and of the weak as well.[75]

A scathing assessment indeed of the class system, but one that is implicit in its construction in *al-ʿĀr*. Just as the class structure has its own past and trajectory, so too does the family structure have "nothing [to] inhibit it, not ethics, not religion, and not the law, because it has placed itself over these things." The logic of oil, of a capitalist system, and of a leisure class, that paralleling the family structure, has "placed itself over" the other structures of power that operate simultaneously. Each can conform only to their own conventions, and work to reach their own goals.

In using cinema to illustrate the idea of structures-as-processes, *al-ʿĀr* also helps contextualize their reading within an inter-textual frame. Just as Manār, ʿIsām, and the rest of the audience watching the film exist in a 'world,' so too does the 'world' within the film exist. They are distinct, but not quite, as Genette observes, saying that while:

> That term 'world' is vague enough, to say the least … empirically it is easy enough to distinguish between, say, the world where the action of a film is taking place and the world where that same film is being shown to

> the audience. These two 'worlds' are never wholly unrelated, and the technology of video makes it possible to merge them almost completely.[76]

In the spirit of the *Palimpsests* that Genette theorizes, just as the worlds of the cinema/audience are written through and over one another, so too do the structures, stories, and individuals write and re-write as distinct texts on the same imaginative parchment (though, perhaps, the structures have to a large extent determined the shape and texture of that parchment). Just as the audience and the film can be read as a single event, so to can we understand them as separate-yet-related.

This is how the inter-textual nation thinks its parts: as related to a whole 'event' that is the nation, but also as complete and–if not distinguished, than—distinguishable in and of themselves. In this configuration, no one structure, individual, or story is able to silence its others; each can be parsed out and understood as its own 'world,' at which point the relationship between the distinct parts becomes as much a part of the story as the story itself. Just as structures become visible, once the national narrative is de-modularized, so too are the structures subsumed within the process of inter-textual narrative. These structures, as well as the texts and by extension the nation, are readable as structures in relationship with other structures, from which they draw an extended meaning. Moreover, the structures are shown, like cinematic texts, to be subject to a process of construction, from which convention ensues. The nation, then, is the culmination of structures and their processes, which have been codified so as to make all but the result visible. The inter-textual nation, by contrast, marks out the structures and their processes by way of showing their role within (instead of above) the imagined national community.

These simultaneous shifts to the national imaginary create a space for the inclusion of the non-dominant in to national narratives. It is a different way of thinking about tradition, about the past, and the way that the past is brought into the present. It challenges the very basic understanding of narrative structure that dominant texts tell their stories through, but at the same time makes room for these assumptions as part and parcel of the Palestinian story, and indeed part of the understanding needed in order to critically assess the nation and its frameworks. This goes at once for understanding and critically assessing the impact of the nation-state as a framework that structured the past, and for now the present, but also

a way of looking forward to the development of different–perhaps more flexible—structures that are self-conscious in their role as agents of power. Perhaps most importantly, thinking a Palestinian nation as one that is made up of relational parts and structures, means that there is space for stories that might have otherwise been silenced. Just as the de-modularizing of the national narrative made space for Palestine to emerge, so too can Palestinians.

Together, the two novels debunk the myth of sovereignty, first by creating an alternative narrative for the cartography of a homeland, and then by understanding structures of power that operate within and across spaces as subsumed within, and not "evenly"[77] over a demarcated space. The works also launched the *al-Malhāt* series. It was only with the publication of *Ṭifl* in 2000 that *Ṭuyūr* was re-released in its second edition, this time as part of *al-Malhāt*. This simultaneous publication/re-publication was the first time that *al-Malhāt* had been used to label any of the novels, and also the first hint that the works were part of a series to which more texts would be added. The two sections below look, in turn, at the alternative cartography and re-thinking of power structures that laid the foundations of an alternative imagining of Palestine.

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[1] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 14.
[2] Obaid and Albayati, *al-Kawn al-ruwāʾī*, 36.
[3] Bakhtin, "Forms of time," 247.
[4] Abraham Plascov, *The Palestinian Refugees in Jordanian Politics 1948-1957*. Boston Spa, U.K: British Library, Document Supply Centre, 1978, 54.
[5] Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press), 2007, Chapter 5, "Guerrillas and martyrs: the evolution of national 'heroes.'"
[6] Nasrallah confirmed the reading during a public talk in Amman at which he was an honoured guest. November 16, 2015 at the Institute francais du proche-orient.
[7] Plascov, *The Palestinian Refugees*, 56.
[8] Nico Israel, *Spirals: The Whirled Image in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press), 2015, 15, 95.
[9] Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature: an Essay in Two Parts." *The Sewanee Review*. 53.2 (Spring 1945), 231. (See also "Spatial Form in Modern Literature: An Essay in Three Parts" 53.3 (Summer 1945); and "Spatial Form in Modern Literature: An Essay in Three Parts" 53.4 (Autumn, 1945))
[10] Frank, "Spatial form," 234.
[11] Frank, "Spatial form," 230.
[12] Frank, "Spatial form," 231.
[13] Elias Khoury, "Rethinking the Nakba," in *Critical Inquiry*. 38.2, 2012, 264.
[14] With little geographic information, and absolutely no description of the exodus from their village (it happens before the protagonist is born) it could also be suggested that Sulaymān meets ʿĀ̄isha

while she is in Dhueisheh, and he is guarding one of the border posts that are implausibly far away from Bethlehem. However, I suggest that their meeting happened pre-Nakba because the story of their meeting is described at a well "near her village [*qurīa*]," (85) with the word not used elsewhere to describe the locations of the present where the characters live.

[15] Anthony Giddens, *A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981, 21.

[16] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 19.

[17] John Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion* (New York: Da Capo Press), 1976, 205.

[18] Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988, 6.

[19] Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy,* 6.

[20] Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy,* 6.

[21] P.J. Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military in Jordan: A Study of the Arab Legion, 1921-1957*. New York: F. A. Praeger, 1967, 5.

[22] Vatikiotis, *Politics and the Military*, 32.

[23] I distinguish here the system that Fūʿad grows up in from a wider system of patriarchy that can also be seen to permeate the British Legion, which has a provenance that is distinct from that described here.

[24] Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s. v. "Pan-Arabism," accessed February 10, 2015, http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/878838/Pan-Arabism.

[25] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 3.

[26] Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008*,* 73.

[27] Morris, *1948,* 73.

[28] Morris, *1948,* 74.

[29] See, for example: Linda Tabar, "Memory, Agency, Counter-Narrative: Testimonies from Jenin Refugee Camp," in *Critical Arts*. 21.1 (2007); Ihab Saloul, *Catastrophe and Exile in the Modern Palestinian Imagination: Telling Memories*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; Ahmad H Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, on how recounting of the events of the Nakba has become an exercise in memory making and reconstructing the past.

[30] Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900*. London: Verso, 1998, 70.

[31] Moretti, *Atlas,* 40.

[32] Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 5.

[33] Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern,* 56.

[34] Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern,* 5.

[35] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books), 1995, 209.

[36] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 14.

[37] See Anderson *Imagined Communities* updated edition (2006) Chapter 2. Anderson sets out "apprehensions of space and time" as a third factor, but this will not be dealt with here, as it was of central focus in the first two sections of the dissertation.

[38] Clifford Geertz, "Primordial and Civic Ties," in *Nationalism* by John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith [Eds], Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, 31.

[39] Aghacy, *Masculine Identity,* 1.

[40] Personal interview with author, November 2012.

[41] Oscar G. Brockett, *The Theatre, an Introduction*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964, 366.

[42] Brockett, *The Theatre,* 11.

[43] Dwight F Reynolds and Kristen Brustad, *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 90.
[44] For more on the question of images in texts, see, for example: Ari J. Blatt, "Phototextuality: Photography, Fiction, Criticism," in *Visual Studies*. 24.2, 2009 [the whole volume is dedicated to the subject, and presents a number of fascinating interventions]; as well as the articles in the collected volume, by Lise Patt, Christel Dillbohner, and W G. Sebald. *Searching for Sebald: Photography After W.G. Sebald*. Los Angeles, Calif: Institute of Cultural Inquiry, 2007.
[45] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981, 110.
[46] Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* 115.
[47] Dava Simpson, "Re-Raising the Flags of Our Fathers" in *Culture as text, text as culture*, by Lafitte, Elodie, Christina Wall, and Mary Cobb Wittrock [Eds.] Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2010, 89.
[48] S Horstkotte and N Pedri, "Introduction: Photographic Interventions," Spring 2008; 29(1), 3.
[49] S Horstkotte and Monika Maron, "Photo-Text Topographies: Photography and the Representation of Space in W. G. Sebald" in *Poetics Today*. Spring2008; 29(1), 53.
[50] Horstkotte, "Photo-text," 53.
[51] CNN International, Friday, May 2,2003 http://edition.cnn.com/2003/US/05/01/bush.transcript/, accessed 23 October, 2013.
[52] This authority is toyed with in *Zaman*, which creates fictional footnotes in an effort to play with concepts of history and 'truth.' See Chapter 6 part three for more on the figure of the fictional character, a British officer, and his equally fictional poetry.
[53] Horstkotte, "Photo-text," 50.
[54] Horstkotte, "Photo-text," 50.
[55] Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 1984, 113.
[56] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 308.
[57] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 123.
[58] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University, 1997. Internet resource. http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/foucault/ (3.2 Archaeology and Genealogy) Accessed 3 Jan 2013.
[59] Andrew, *Concepts in Film,* 113.
[60] Robert Zemeckis *et al*., *Forrest Gump*. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 2001.
[61] Zemeckis *et al*., *Forrest Gump*, 2001.
[62] Peter O'Toole *et al*., *Lawrence of Arabia*. United States: Columbia Tristar Home Entertainment, 1962.
[63] O'Toole, *et al., Lawrence of Arabia*, 1962.
[64] See also: Jeffrey Melnick, *9/11 Culture: America Under Construction*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009 for his discussion of the use of images and in particular the images of the attacks on structuring the discourse of "The war against terror," after 2001.
[65] Council on Foreign Relations, *The War on Terror*. New York: Foreign Affairs/Council on Foreign Relations, 2003, 12.
[66] Netta Crawford, "The Road to Global Empire: the Logic of U.S. Foreign Policy After 9/11," in *Orbis*. 48.4, 2004, 686.
[67] Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.
[68] Crawford, "Road to Global Empire," 687.
[69] Paul T Anderson *et al., There Will Be Blood*. Hollywood, CA: Paramount, 2008.
[70] Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, *Ṣuwar al-wujūd: Al-sīnimā tata'ammal*. Beirut: al-Dār al-'Arabiya lil-'Ulūm Nāshirūn, 2010, 174.
[71] Naṣrallāh, *Ṣuwar al-wujūd,* 174.
[72] Naṣrallāh, *Ṣuwar al-wujūd,* 179.

[73] Naṣrallāh, *Ṣuwar al-wujūd,* 174.
[74] Naṣrallāh, *Ṣuwar al-wujūd,* 174.
[75] Naṣrallāh, *Ṣuwar al-wujūd,* 179-80.
[76] Genette, *Paratexts*, 295.
[77] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 26, 33, 71.

Part III—Palestinian Stories

> *Ibrāhīm has given us a feat of luminous writing, it is not a calming model, but takes a marginalized point of view and makes it visible.*
>
> *Faiṣal Darrāj*[1]

The result of the literary devices that imagine a national Palestine outside of the confines of the nation-state is an alternative that includes diverse, minority, and dissenting experiences. Within this framework, realities that challenge dominant forms of narrative and hegemonic discourses about what the national is 'supposed to be,' are not silenced or excluded. Instead, writing the nation inter-textually allows once marginal stories to be incorporated within a complex network of texts that make up the nation. In being able to subsume structures of power that tend to silence those outside of dominant categories, the stories of women, children, and the poor, for example (Chapter 6), are able not only to make claims on the national discourse, but come to fully represent a national experience. What have been hitherto largely seen as 'minority' stories, representing a sub-text of the nation at best, can now be read alongside and in conversation with the characters, figures, and structures that once had them disappear. The same becomes true for the problem of fixed national symbols that privileged limited articulations of the nation (Chapter 7). An inter-textual framework makes room for change; and can accommodate the importance of national signifiers like the figure of the fighter/hero or the mother of the martyr, for example, but at the same time see them as problematic, and offer dissenting or contrasting examples that are no less national.

Given the work done to bring these stories in the national imagination, the following chapters will outline the character and quality of once marginal stories. Looking further, sections will consider some of the links and conversations being initiated between these previously marginal voices and their once 'dominant' other. Analysis will show how the constellation, in holding within it both the dominant and the marginal, is able to represent and allow room to change, paradigms of the national as they develop over time. A look at these new national stories, for example, will show how it is that in the inter-textual nation, the figure of the mother can remain a national symbol of steadfastness and courage, but how the individual mother can at the same time be recognized as a fragile, fallible,

individual; and how this is also national. Readings of these symbols and stories show the flexibility of the inter-textual nation and how the configuration of the nation allows for oppositional and contradictory narratives, just as it does for 'minority' and marginal events and locations. The sections below show how, once texts are subsumed within the inter-textual nation, structures of power no longer dictate what it is possible to call–or claim as—national.

Chapter 5 – Women, 'fools,' children, and refugees

> Rosemary Sayigh recalls a politicized teenager's claim that "my mother told us about Palestine, but she didn't know the plots" (Sayigh 1998b: 42), where the plots (*mu'amarat*) designated larger political forces causing the catastrophe. In the nationalist milieu, elite Palestinian voices belonging to politicians, military leaders, and those with Western education are given priority, and these voices are usually masculine.[2]
>
> – Laleh Khalili and Isabelle Humphries, "Gender of Nakba Memory"

As Khalili and Humphries point out, the inclusion of women's voices or experiences in 'official' narratives of the past has been a challenge principally because "elite Palestinian voices belonging to politicians, military leaders, and those with Western education are given priority." Since these categories rarely include women, privileging such positions in the telling of the national tale means a double exclusion. Not only are these voices masculine, but they are also those of adults. Though children now make up more than 50% of the Palestinian population,[3] they have little authority over the meaning of the nation or the codification of symbols within which they live. Even further limiting the voices that can speak of and define Palestine are issues of status, not only class but also the question of urban versus rural populations. For the most part, the former are the groups who codify the nation, who are connected to intact networks of knowledge circulation,[4] while the latter become fodder for national symbolism.

So, while the peasant-refugee has long been a national signifier for connection to a lost land, they rarely gain access to space where their own stories can be told.[5] An inter-textual national imaginary gives play to the re-thinking, re-writing, and re-imagining of the voices of women, of children, and refugees, as well as the non-urban, and those whose educations come from sources outside of school textbooks. So where, "By and large, the kinds of tasks

women [and I suggest children, and the very poor] performed in the struggle and the nature of forms of social control exerted over their behaviour were reformulations of male [and indeed other forms of] hegemony,"[6] with space for alternative narratives, there is also space for counterhegemonic experiences, or simply those that the prevailing discourse finds irrelevant. Looking at figures of mothers, of the mad, and of children, this chapter illustrates how 'minority' stories become central to the national narrative when they are written and read within an inter-textual framework. At the same time, this and the following chapter give space to explore the kind of nation that the works of the Palestine project imagine; to draw out within an analysis the types of discourse and flexibility between parts of the nation that this alternative view of imagined community entails.

Mothers

The most iconic literary figuration of the Palestinian mother was written in 1969—short years after the Arab defeat of 1967—by Ghassān Kanafānī in his novella *Umm Saʿd*.[7] The titular character—known only as the 'mother of Saʿd'— is portrayed as a paragon of steadfastness, a hero herself and mother of natural heroes (the novella reveals that her son Saʿd has gone off to join the resistance). In the story, Umm Saʿd worries about her son, and initially grapples with what appear competing concerns about his safety, and his ability to be a hero and return Palestine to the Palestinians. In the end, however, she is transformed from the mother of Saʿd, to the mother of all fighters, giving up on worry for her son alone, and instead displacing that worry toward the nation and its safe return. She thus metaphorically becomes the mother of Palestine, who is made a mother only by her willingness to transfer love of an individual son to love of a collective 'sons' of the nation. At some point in the process, Umm Saʿd stops being an individual, and becomes a symbol; a process that Kanafānī may not have intended, but certainly recognized.

In his preface to the novella Kanafānī describes Umm Saʿd as a character with "strength greater than a rock and patience more than endurance itself."[8] He also readily admits that she is meant to represent all Palestinian mothers. As he explains, Umm Saʿd is a "real woman, whom I know well, whom I see regularly and to whom I am somehow related… nevertheless, Umm Saʿd is not an individual woman,"[9] she is a myth, a myth that takes over the individual and creates the paradigm –the limits and possibilities—of motherhood for Palestinian women. The late Egyptian author and critic Radwa Ashour observed as much when she wrote of the figure, that, "Despite her revolutionary qualities, […] the image of

woman as mother and her great contributions position [Umm Saʿd and the Palestinian woman] more as a revolutionary mother than as a revolutionary in and of herself." [10] In the Palestinian lexicon, then, woman is limited in her national capacity as mother, and as a very particular type of mother. This idea is taken up in *Aʻrās āmina*'s [Āmina's Weddings] (2004), whose protagonist Randa reflects on the portrayal as part of a larger process of grappling with the question of representation of the Gaza Strip, where she keeps a diary amid life in the Second Intifada. Randa writes not only against the figure of the mother—which has become an oppressive and even vanishing force for the real experiences of women—but of the process of representation in general, seeing as problematic the mechanisms of production and publication determined by powerful organizations inside and outside of Palestine.

As a budding young writer, Randa first tries her hand at news articles. She identifies a gap in the coverage of Gaza and brings one of her stories about a child's funeral to the news offices in the Strip. She had begun to write news articles detailing the things that she sees, thinking that the articles about aspects of life in Gaza that go unmentioned in the press are just what the media needs to understand what is happening. The process of misinformation is illustrated forcefully in the novel, with an interpretation of the real-life story of Abū ʿAṭṭār, a Palestinian killed in the thick of the Second Intifada. In Randa's life, the headline news happened thus:

> -…on my way I heard that ʿAbū ʿAṭṭār had been martyred, so I said that I would go to his wake
> - You mean Muṣṭafā Ramlāwī? Randa asked her.
> …
> -They said he was carrying an explosive to plant at the checkpoint
> -ʿAbū ʿAṭṭār? I'd have to be crazy to believe that story (49)

The incident is picked directly from the news headlines. Of the incident, the BBC reported, "the Israeli army claimed that by shooting the man the soldiers had thwarted an attempted attack." It was one of the few incidents that international media outlets that also reported, writing that, "Palestinians are claiming that the man, identified as Mustafa Ramlawi from the Bureij Refugee Camp, was in fact an innocent homeless man, who was mentally handicapped."[11]

News that he had been threatening soldiers throws Randa over the edge. His representation in the news did not capture the true tragedy of the killing, or its effect on the community, nor did the news leave space for the living to make sense of what happened. It is for this reason that Randa follows the advice of a neighbour: "write about them [the martyrs], write what they said, what they dreamed of" (125). The articles are all rejected, however, and, having "not been able to publish one report […] in any part of the newspaper" (61), Randa is angered, but sees in the rejections a larger problem:

> It was my mistake to take up writing in order to correct the newspaper's titles […] but it was enough to take up writing my nightly misgivings, day after day, to understand what was happening in Gaza. (5)

So she turns to her diary and reflects on the problem of representation of not only the martyr, but also their families, most specifically their mothers, who share with her so much of their wisdom, and yet never appear in the news.

For Randa, it was not the resistance activities of her absent brothers that told the story of Gaza, but the words "of the mothers who never went to school a day in their lives, but would suddenly say something so deep, so insightful, that no learned person would be able to say half of it" (60). The more she writes about how members of her own community react to and deal with traumas, the less the media narrative of Gaza makes sense to her. Indeed, "the things [the mothers] had been thinking about all their lives" (60) resonated much more with Randa than quickly-written news articles. She believed that her articles had the power to overturn the newspaper representation, and that the newspaper editors felt threatened, and in them "discovered that these children thought better than them, and that the sad mothers thought better than them, because they [the news editors] are the children of the dictionary and not the children of life" (62). Randa begins attending the funerals of all of the children killed during the Intifada, and recording the things that the women at these funerals say. It is this, the talk of the mothers of the martyrs, that leads her to think about Umm Saʿd, a mother (*the* mother) who loses her son to the Palestinian resistance, but decides that she would rather he die a fighter than a coward.

Her reflection is worth quoting at length:

> I know a woman like Umm Saʿd, she will always be amazing, but will she be amazing in the same way after twenty, thirty, forty years? Maybe she was like me, like us, but this is not exactly my question:
>
> How did Ghassān put the most beautiful of her in the novel?
>
> Was it because when she met him she loved him like he was Saʿd her son, and so he made her feelings erupt as though she was talking about her soul? Or because the novel wouldn't be a novel if it was like that, and her character couldn't be a character if it wasn't like that? He said what he needed to say in the time that he had, and said it in the words that he had in mind, and no other words but them, and made the rest disappear, only to appear a second time and say what must be said at another moment?
>
> How many pages would Ghassān Kanafānī have written if he wanted to say the story of Umm Saʿd in all its minute detail? And would we love her if we read her life in a thousand pages, or two thousand? Would we love her like we loved her in ninety pages? And is she full here, not missing anything, simply filling the moments of a time that the people have left behind? (62)

What Randa wonders about, is the possibility, forty (almost fifty) years later, of representing Umm Saʿd as a woman who is saddened by the loss of her son. Randa asks if it is possible to write of women, of mothers, whose experience, as Khalili put it "is wrought in the crucible of gender, class, race, and colonialism," and to find a way of reading mothers within forms of telling that are "permeated with and mediated by relations of power and domination."[12] One of the factors silencing parts of the mother's story is, ironically, the story of the mother.

Randa seeks redress for the parts of Umm Saʿd that were left out of the novella, and the resulting parts of Palestinian women that were left out of the national discourse after the mother of the martyr became the lens through which to read motherhood, and indeed womanhood. Kanafānī himself at some point realized the problem with the canonization of Umm Saʿd after the story was published, and, according to research on his life and works, "there are indications that he wrote, or thought of writing, at least two further episodes about her."[13] Realizing the need for an expanded framework for the possible roles and signifiers for Palestinian women, Kanafānī lamented, "If only there were enough time, now one could really write some Palestinian stories!"[14] Not only does an inter-textual nation open space for alternative narratives, of and even from "the mothers who never went to school a day in their lives," but it puts into perspective the reason for dominance of a particular portrayal developed at a particular time.

Randa's reflections point out that Kanafānī "said what he needed to say in the time that he had," acknowledging that at the time that Kanafānī wrote, the only stories that seemed possible were those that used the woman as a rhetorical device.[15] In asking what is missing from *Umm Saʿd* and wondering if a different time can produce a different memory, Randa brings into the story of the Palestinian mother the different structures operating to give her meaning. So, in comparing Umm Saʿd to the grieving mothers whose children's funerals Randa attends the intimation is that the paragon of commitment could also grieve, and that this—like Umm Saʿd—could be national. In critically asking if the symbol of steadfastness was only structured as it was in the novella "because the novel wouldn't be a novel if it was like that, and her character couldn't be a character if it wasn't like that?," Randa pinpoints the lapses that result when the stories of women in the Palestinian nation are "permeated with and mediated by relations of power and domination." Through Randa's diaries, Umm Saʿd is reincarnated, and what Kanafānī, according to Randa, "needed to say in the time that he had" is opened up to what needs to be said by the non-dominant characters whose voices had been silenced. Within an inter-textual nation, narratives like those of the grieving mothers are autonomous, no longer in opposition to a dominant Umm Saʿd, since she—although still present as a part of the nation—no longer precludes their own experience.

The question of the mother as a national role and as an individual in the nation is further expanded on in *Taḥta shams al-ḍuḥā*, where protagonist Yasīn realizes the restrictive nature of the 'mother of the martyr' paradigm. In his reflections, the character traces some of the ramifications that follow on from a mother who can only celebrate death. He laments, that within Palestinian national rhetoric:

> It occurred to me that the hero becomes a better hero whenever the number of deaths around him or within him increases. Indeed the mother of the martyr becomes more holy and heroic when another one of her own is martyred. (62)

Because of this, he adds, "a beautiful idea like freedom is not realized except in the beauty of death, not in the beauty of life" (62), and value is given only through death, with the heroic effort of life having no national currency. Boxed into this defined role, the women of the nation are as if trapped in a projection or an imagination of themselves. Staring at the legacy of Umm Saʿd, as Randa's grandmother warns, "means they'll remember their shadows more than they remember their real selves, and with time, they won't be able to

see anything but a picture" (121). Randa, Yasīn, and the inter-textual project of the Palestine project seek to excavate the women from the mirror, and to imagine the other hundreds of pages of the story of Umm Saʿd. For her, this is what it means to better understand and represent Gaza.

By including the mention of Umm Saʿd, the newspapermen, the news headlines, as well as her own portrayal of women and life in Gaza, the figure of the mother is complicated. Instead of a reaction to the dominant form, the novels show how this dominance is problematic, how it at times gives agency to women, and at times stifles options for expressing the complexity of feeling of an individual or community. The stories put the figure of the mother and more diverse representations of what a mother can be and feel into conversation, here literally using intertextuality to prompt and inter-textual representation, where each of the elements of the discourse are to be suspended in perpetual conversation within the nation constellation. Though a powerful starting point in the opening up of discourse on the nation and its symbols, it is in the treatment of madness—and allowing the 'surreal' as a paradigm to also be national—where inter-textuality opens genuinely new possibilities for imagining.

Madness

At once a rejection of conventions "devised by the powerful who, by making claims to absolute knowledge try to hold on to their power,"[16] and "an act of self-assertion, insomuch as it is a final rejection of the unjust norms of society, a counter disclaimer, a rejection of society's 'irrational' sanity,"[17] madness plays a critical role in accessing the Palestinian narrative. Within an inter-textual construct that precisely does away with stifling conventions in order to make space for Palestinian experience, the frame of narrative itself might be considered mad. To give narrative authority to a foetus, as in *Ṭuyūr* or the utterly de-conventionalized ordering of thoughts and structures in *Hadhayān*, madness, 'delirium,' are just what the new narrative model of inter-textuality seek to induce. There is indeed, as Ouyang noted, "something resembling madness in the Palestinian situation."[18] Madness, however, just as delirium in *Hadhayān*, offers not only a way out of the paradigm of power and dominance, but its imaginative solution.

For Salwā, in *Zaytūn Al-shawāriʿ*, what others categorize as madness is her truth, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān must let go of his assumptions about truth and narrative before he is able to understand her experience. The journalist must also let go of societal categorizations of madness, and recognize it as "a means of dismissing the dissenter, of disclaiming the contravener of convention and upsetter of perceived correctness."[19] As he works to let go of his desire to 'prove' Salwā's story through 'authoritative accounts,' Salwā's Arabic teacher, Sitt Zaynab urges ʿAbd al-Raḥmān to believe the young woman's story. When he asks Salwā about her teacher, she adds "they said to me: she believes you because she is crazy like you are" (12). As a woman, and a widow, Sitt Zaynab does not have the power to challenge or change the existing narrative. When she tries, she is cast aside as crazy, incapable of sense, in its role as power-making. Khamīs, the simple garbage collector, a sort of scavenger who lives in a stairwell of a camp building in Salwā's neighbourhood gets the same treatment. He also believes Salwā, "Khamīs believed me, she screamed in their faces" (12) but as the neighbourhood 'fool,' he is given no credibility (131). Khamīs too is taunted, and so is his wife, called "*majnūn"* (crazy) herself for deciding to pair up with him, "the word made her smaller, that word, '*majnūn*,' launched as a disgraceful insult" (132).

Singing a few lines of Egyptian revolutionary crooner Muḥammad Qandīl's 1950s "Woe to the enemy of the house," Khamīs recalls the history of the rhetoric behind its lyrics "Brave are we Arabs and be there not a coward among us" (*iḥnaʿarab shʿajān, māḥd fīna jabān*), which prompts a reflection on the state of camp society, and the logic behind the lyrics. The boasting lyrics of Arab nationalism, released shortly after Egypt's Gamal Abd al-Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal,[20] were meant to taunt the "enemies of the house" (Britain, France, and Israel), daring them to strike against a brave and unified Arab nation. It is as an extension of the rhetoric of the ALA explored in *Ṭifl al-mimḥa*, a rhetoric that appeared—in its ignoring of the gap between what was claimed and what was true—to be more mad than Khamīs could ever be. From the fall of Palestine in 1948 to the nationalization of the Suez Canal in 1956, the tradition of boasting continued on through June 1967 and then October 1973. Khamīs still sings the song of the Suez Crisis, a song about "the last of the wars" won by the brave Arab forces. In the wake of defeat after defeat, however, the song rings more and more hollow. Khamīs laments, "I need to find another song Līna, but what happened to singing? I swear to you Līna, that everyone who was able to absorb June '67 survived; whoever went crazy, went crazy that day" (152). Though such revolutionary

songs "signified among audiences an empowered militancy through associations of masculine power and solidarity,"[21] Khamīs deflates the narrative as empty, nonsensical, and an example of misplaced power and signification. October, *tishrīn*, such an easy shorthand for the last defeat of Arab armies by Israeli forces, which powerfully evokes memories of militant resistance, where "SAMs would rent the night looking for some radar aircraft or other" (152), "was gone, like every other month before it went, like every month after" (152).

While the neighbourhood casts Khamīs and his wife Līna out of regular society, "wondering only if he was going to heaven or hell because he drank beer" (152), Salwā sees them as a part of her story. Explaining why ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's first draft had not been able to represent her, Salwā suddenly stops short, "but wait, where are Khamīs and Līna? Where are they in the book? I searched for them and I didn't find them; where did you make them go?" (47). For Salwā, Khamīs was a living embodiment of her own narrative, and without him and his insights on madness her story is incomplete. As ʿAbd al-Raḥmān unwittingly asks, "Must you go mad to understand what she says?" (49), in the end, the answer is no, because the madness is in not believing Khamīs. Rather, madness exists in the frames that cast him as a fool. The frame of an inter-textual narrative not only gives autonomous space to the stories of the 'mad,' the delirious; it dissolves power once inherent in the truth-claims of "social, religious and intellectual conventions."[22] Instead, it is the 'crazy' logic of the nation-state, of cascading dominance and all those structures invested with power that are shown to be mad.

So, where Salwā's uncle abrasively asks ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, "A novel!! And will you bring back Palestine with your novel?" (43), the answer, in a way, is yes. In revealing the failures of the novel-form to express Salwā's tragedy, and expanding with *Zaytūn* the possibilities of telling madness within the frame of the nation, the failures of the text become just that: failures of a text, of the national as a coded form of belonging. When these failures can be accounted for in an imaginative framework, Palestine is made visible, it is 'brought back' in the sense that it bypasses and encompasses existing and occluding frames.

Madness is also the legacy of Yasīn, the protagonist of *Taḥta shams al-ḍuḥā* (2004). In its opening vignette, Yasīn's aunt Umm Walīd yells across her courtyard: "'ʿAbū Walīd!" at which her husband turns from conversation with his friends and yells back "What is it?"

When his wife answers, "I love you!" the man blushes, muttering to his friends, "Yasīn will drive her crazy in the end" (5-6), abashedly complaining of the man's insistent philosophy of love as a way to contravene the madness of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. A returned fighter, Yasīn is constantly at war with the prevailing conventions of Ramallah, where it is only his past that matters, and his heroic deeds. Countering this, Yasīn insists he has not returned to his homeland just to be buried beneath its soil. Instead, he sees his return as an opportunity; "ten years were waiting for him at least, there in front of him to do something, maybe something important, something that would make clear the meaning of this return for him" (44). As he re-makes a life in Palestine, Yasīn challenges Umm Walīd to think about the life she lives; Yasīn asks her to critically evaluate the occupation she is used to, and the stasis of merely symbolic form family life can take. He coaxes Umm Walīd to think critically about the logic of occupation, and to re-evaluate what has been said to make 'sense,' what is accepted, and what is categorized as nonsense:

> Have you ever in your life seen an airplane drop flowers on a city?
> Of course not.
> But you've seen an airplane drop bombs on a city.
> Any number of times.
> You see! The world is crazy! And you! How many times have you told ʿAbū Walīd that you love him in front of other people? (136)

As Yasīn points out to his aunt, it is the logic of war and of violence that has prevailed in Ramallah. For Umm Walīd, her husband, and the rest of the community, violence has become the logical answer to a continued resistance to occupation. In the process, however, violence has become the logic within which those resisting have become entrapped. It is according to this logic of violence that love and expressions of love—like an airplane dropping flowers over a city—become classified as crazy. To the contrary, however, it is rather love that must become the paradigm of resistance, in order to upend the logic of violence that has become so oppressive.

In the final scene of the novel, Umm Walīd under grey clouds and beside the destroyed home (likely the result of punitive measures taken on the family after one of its children threw rocks at a military jeep (142)), sees an Israeli military patrol approaching the village. It is madness encroaching. Perhaps spurred on by the ugliness of the impending scene, she once again yells out across the village square: "'ʿAbū Walīd!" Again the men turn their heads. This time so do the new wives and children that have been absorbed into the family

in the intervening years. ʿAbū Walīd again replies, "What is it?" and hears, "I love you ʿAbū Walīd, I love you!" Then:

> ʿAbū Walīd nodded his head, squinted his eyes a little more sparkling than usual, and he looked at the faces of the men who were with him. He raised his head tall and the children stopped their football game in the square, and the sparrows didn't know which way to look. He let out a sigh. […] and yelled: I love you Umm Walīd!
>
> What did you say? She yelled back, even though she had heard clearly. She replied because she wanted to hear it over and over again. (178)

In the repeated scene, ʿAbū Walīd does not blush, but holds his head high, and the children pay attention. They at once know this is the legacy of Yasīn, and their own weapon as an alternative way of reading dominant narratives. More than a trope "representational of the real and symbolic frustration and anger against patriarchal practices which happen to be central in the post-colonial state apparatus,"[23] madness becomes a separate structure of thought. Madness is an outlet precisely not beholden to the structures of patriarchy or the nation state. Instead, the frame of madness allows these structures to be seen as mad.

Madness, then, is set up as a bulwark against oppressive structures. Refusing to 'make sense' becomes an insistence on a Palestinian narrative. When madness disappears, so too does Palestine. Power structures in the end get the better of Salwā, who is murdered by the figures that her story challenges. Symbolically, she is thrown from the roof of her own home three times. Each time the man who has raped her, standing on the pavement, calls out: "is she dead yet?" and as long as the answer is no, another of the structures of power she threatens carries her again to the roof, to throw her down:

> She died and everything finished. She died and her diamonds with her
> -Her diamonds? […]
> - Her madness, he said, after a few moments of silence. (46)

When Salwā was killed "everything finished," her story and the counter-hegemonic, inter-textual frame that it demanded in order to be written, was overcome by the madness of power. The genius of the inter-textual imaginary, however, is that her story persists, and has an autonomy and indeed an authority that will continue to reveal that it is the world that is crazy, not Salwā, not Yasīn, or Khamīs, or Sitt Zaynab. Cast out of structures of power, the mad and the marginalized can see its failings. Indeed, madness does not only say "a

great deal about the lived experiences of the nation-state and the future of literary pursuits," [24] it *is* that experience, and an alternative form of imagining must be accessed to represent that truth.

In making space for the narratives of mothers, and of those who have been categorized as 'mad' by dominant structures of power, the voices of these marginalized individuals and groups are able to participate in the alternative crafting of a national narrative. These voices create a narrative that must accommodate the realities of non-dominant figures. What results is a frame that can at once recognize dominance and the importance of dominant structures in shaping Palestinian experience at the same time as it can absorb individuals who challenge or critique these positions. A national imaginary emerges that is as much structured around the narratives of mothers, 'fools,' (and as the next sections will outline) children and the other forgotten members of the nation as it is structures of power and their representatives. Looking next at the narratives of children in the Palestine project, and of its inclusion of forgotten locations and symbols of the nation, the scaffolding of an alternative paradigm emerges.

Children

Sent to get flour from the aid agency, the child-narrator in *Ṭuyūr* gets his first erection in the UNRWA queue, and panic stricken is torn between his desire to flee in embarrassment, and his duty to his family to stay and make sure there is food on the table (212-13). Told through the perspective of *al-ṣaghīr*, and within the narrative loops described in Chapter 3, the intensely personal moment of near-universal male adolescent experience is allowed to be precisely that; the story of a boy who is growing up. Within the alternative logic of the Palestine project, and the space that an inter-textual nation creates for the non-dominant and non-political, the experiences of children can also be inscribed. For *al-ṣaghīr*, the experience of his first erection is about his own struggle to make sense of and find a place in the confusing life of the camps, but within that, it is simply the experience of childhood, expressed and experienced according to its own logic. While, it is true, that "what is made visible … is less documentary evidence of the real state of women, children, [etc.] than imaginative constructions of those subjects produced in their name," [25] giving space to the thoughts of a child gives space in the national narrative to "an un-corrupted, fantasy-filled

existence in which the child acts out his normal feelings and instincts unfettered by social constraints."[26]

Rarely employed in Arabic literature,[27] the use of a child's voice taking control of the narrative can be seen in several of the works of Naṣrallāh's Palestine project. Just as in the development and use of child protagonists in early 19th English Literature, in the works of the Palestine project new and "particular forms of knowledge" are being crafted, which in turn "require new narrative methods attuned to the material world at its minutest levels."[28] From the opening chapters of *Ṭifl* where readers get to know Fūʿad as a toddler who makes little sense of the world around him, to the bulk of the chapters narrated by Randa in *Aʿrās āmina,* where she remains a young girl and eventually young adult, to smaller parts played by children that are no less critical to the worldview being explored in the novel. For example, in *Taḥta shams al-ḍuḥā* (2004), both times the protagonist marries it is to widowed women who have young sons. The boys, Nuʿmān and Nimr, are both young and innocent, and bring into the story "the most minute and impressionistic of mental processes in order to disrupt and alter the status quo."[29] The boys are insistent, curious, and refuse to accept what is for the adults of the novels 'common sense.' They are indeed "perceptive and sensitive because less biased in their readings of the social world."[30] Since the national is very much premised on the existence of the social world, making space for children within this framework allows a near automatic critique of the social structures at work in their respective locations and time-spaces of Palestine.

In each of the cases, children present their own logic, their own interpretation of 'sense' within the worlds of the novels. For example, Nuʿmān, in *Taḥta shams* insists when told that he must stop throwing stones at soldiers for fear of his life, "No, no, I can't go away before I throw stones at them, have you forgotten that they killed my father?" (105). The same disregard for safety in favor of symbols that make them feel safe is exhibited by the protagonist's first step-son Nimr, who returns to the site of his destroyed home in Tel az-Zaatar to find his schoolbooks. When sounds of bombs "broke the air and exploded in front of him, no more than ten meters away," (92) Yasīn grabs the boy who continues clutching his notebooks and tries to run for safety. Both boys are totally unaware of the possible harm that can (and does) come to them, focusing instead on the intimately personal. Both absorb some of the 'values' or norms of their community (resistance, education), but fail to see

them in a wider social perspective. Instead, they preserve their small goals without cognizance of the real logics of war or occupation that shaped them. The same is true for Rashīd al-Nimr's youngest son in *Hadhayān*, who in insisting to his father that the family should have a pet dog, instead of the birds Rashīd prefers, reflects back to his father precisely the problematic logic of the 'war on terror' that had slowly pervaded amid the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. In making his argument, the young boy ends up giving a five-page monologue, setting up an elaborate trajectory of tragedy that he says would stem from the purchase of a bird, as opposed to the dog.

The monologue creates a logic of events, laying out an alternative understanding of the 'new era' that Bush promised when American troops occupied Iraq. The monologue repeats the same sentence pattern, "If … [then] there will be a problem, [but] if you don't …. [then] there will be two problems," connecting events according to a logic of the politics in an exaggerated way. This sets up a cause and effect paradigm that is modelled on a wider 'common sense' that the boy perceives. The first sentence is quoted in full, and the following sections simply trace the stages of the argument with ellipses for the text quoted above:

> If you buy us a bird, there will be a problem, if you don't buy us a bird, there will be two problems […] if there is a falcon in the area there are two problems, if the falcon sees the bird... if the falcon is hungry... if it comes to eat it... if we don't kill it... if I love it ...if I get angry at it ...if the anger doesn't go quickly.. [I will be] hit with depression ... if the depression doesn't leave quickly ... I [may] try to take my life ... if I go crazy ... if I go totally crazy… if you take me to an institution ... if I don't love the hospital ... if I think about fleeing ... if I try to flee ... if I am able to flee ... if the guards don't see me ... if they don't tell the police... if I don't return home … if I don't marry well ... if the police don't get me ... if I go more crazy ... if I'm dangerous ... if they chase me … if I flee to America ... if I hate America ... if I curse America ... if America hears me ... if America gets mad ... if they know who I am ... if they don't forget they are mad ... if we can't favour them ... if they attack the county ... if they launch a powerful attack ... if they occupy us ... if they catch me ... forget the idea! ... if you don't forget the idea... if you take revenge ... they will kill you or not kill you...
>
> The youngest finally fell silent, and caught his breath, and then he said:
>
> And you want to put us in that position? Buy us a dog and leave us! (31-35)

The argument is absurd, and gets more so as the boy imagines the reaction of "America" to being cursed if he were hypothetically to escape the institution he could be committed to if he fell in love with the falcon that might eat the birds that his father wants to buy for the balcony. He personifies the concept of the American administration and its foreign policy, but understands clearly that the response of "America" will be to attack, to "occupy us." This stream of associations is based on the life experiences of a young boy amid the US war on Iraq, and represents his extrapolation of what was an equally absurd political process.

Crucially, the worldview expressed by Rashīd's son is not only given space in *Hadhayān*, but its logic makes up one of the inter-texts that spur Rashīd on to developing his own critical understanding of the world around him. This is not immediate, however, and the novel's narrator makes a point of showing how the protagonist's inability to connect the dots from the logic of the War on Terror to domestic life leads to his own misunderstanding of the situation. When Rashīd gets into a fight with his wife, for example, about the bodies of the dead birds that keep being eaten by a falcon, that litter the balcony, he tells her glibly, that the pile of feathers are "a long way from looking like that hill of men in the ʿAbū Gharīb prison" (132). The remark is accompanied by the ubiquitous image of Iraqi prisoners with their posing American guards, piled naked in a heap, just as the birds are piled, denuded of their feathers, on the family balcony.

Further remarking on Rashīd's as-yet inability to understand how the war and its structures is shaping his life and decisions, the narrator later interjects, "And so for him they [the bodies of the dead birds he had bought for his children] had no connection to those dead he had seen a long time ago on the satellite channels" (178) (a remark that is once again accompanied by a news archive image, this time of slain Iraqis). Nowhere is the narrative perspective of a child more central to the logic of a novel in the Palestine project, however, than in *Ṭuyūr* where it is the observations of *al-ṣaghīr* that guide the entire work. Not only does the novel take "a marginalized point of view and makes it visible,"[31] as Palestinian literary critic Faiṣal Darrāj observed, but it takes that point of view as a starting point for the nation. It is thus the three central pillars of the boy's worldview—his family, birds, and Ḥanūn—that push and pull him through life that become the narrative elements driving the novel. Instead of politics or pre-determined narrative trajectories, plot is pushed forward as

these three elements develop, overlap, and intertwine as the central forces of the work. Indeed, it is the specific inter-relationship between the three themes that the title of the novel, "birds of caution," draws attention to.

From the very start, birds, family, and Ḥanūn were the impetuses for plot development. One of *al-ṣaghīr* earliest recollections, from his days still inside of his mother's womb, is the sound of birdsong, audible only because his mother's belly is exposed as she and *al-ṣaghīr*'s husband giggle under a mulberry tree:

> I heard that song I would never forget, a real bird was singing. It didn't shake, it didn't flee, it watched and listened to all that chaos going on under the tree, and when the storm of laughter quieted, I heard the beat of ruffling feathers. It was the first time I had heard the sound so closely. That night I decided to come out. (6-7)

The sound of the bird and the symbolic freedom of its feathered wings are what urge *al-ṣaghīr* into the world. Already linked with his parents, the sound of ruffling feathers takes on further linked significance when he hears for the first time the footsteps of his betrothed, Ḥanūn. She is described as approaching, "with soft footsteps, just like that singing [of bird feathers], with the same ruffling beat" (8), her too-long dress making the sounds of flapping wings. Birds, then, are at once associated with the outdoors—a space of free movement and exploration for him later—with his family, and with the approach of his beloved. They, linked with his parents and Ḥanūn, are indeed what drive him from womb to world so that he can experience each more intimately. These linked desires are what pull the novel to its conclusion, growing with the boy as he comes to grips with his role as eldest boy in the family, his budding sexuality, and his love of birds. It is, then, these associations that forge links between Palestinian places, people, and ideas; the worldview of a child drives new national pathways, associations, and networks.

At the core of the boy's relationship with birds is the idea of "teaching them caution." The links with family and Ḥanūn mean that the symbol being developed extends to all three. The logic of the boy is that he will trap the birds because they are fascinating. He wants to be near them, to learn about them, but does not want to trap the animals for either dinner or as captives. Instead, *al-ṣaghīr* says he traps the birds so that they will learn how the traps work, and are thus warned away from them in the future. The plan works; as one of his neighbours shouts: "you taught the birds to be cautious and now none of us are able to

catch them" (114). *Al-ṣaghīr* later teaches his friend Khalīl to hunt, and when they trap their first bird and it flies from the net, Khalīl cried, "We lost him!" to which the boy replied, no, "We gained him" (123). For *al-ṣaghīr*, 'gaining' the bird is ensuring that it would not be captured. It is a view he struggles to find a practice for with Ḥanūn. While he can prevent other camp boys from catching birds by teaching them caution, when Khalīl falls for Ḥanūn and starts "hunting" her (145) in addition to the birds of the field—with no intention of 'releasing' either—the boy is at a loss.

Feeling he has lost his betrothed to another 'hunter,' *al-ṣaghīr* is for the first time challenged by other boys. Sexually awakened, the competition is no longer about fowl in the field, but birds of another kind. Playing on the Palestinian slang for (specifically) a young boy's penis (*hamamah*, also the slang for "dove") *al-ṣaghīr* and his love for birds are at once slighted when he is challenged by a rival: "Don't you have a *hamamah*?" the rival teases, indicating that *al-ṣaghīr* is indeed still a boy and unable to compete for women's affections. Angered, and aware that his answer will also indicate his ability to compete for Ḥanūn's affections (who, when confronted, accuses *al-ṣaghīr* of being indifferent toward her, and of spending all his time with the birds in the field instead of spending time with her), he answers defensively—though with a certain degree of cleverness—with the only language he has: "No, I have an '*aṣfūr* [literally: bird]" (145). The now adolescent *al-ṣaghīr* works to validate his sexual coming of age with the same vocabulary as he uses to assert his prowess in the fields where doves are easy to catch, but songbirds a more challenging conquest.

Though he sees both his desire for birds and his desire for Ḥanūn within the same frame, he has no control over the 'field' when it comes to the elder boys exploring their own sexuality. He retreats, then, into the world of poetry. Since he cannot win Ḥanūn with his bird catching skill—which she sees as childish—he tries to write his feelings for her and the birds simultaneously in verse. Again in the poems, love, flight, and freedom are aligned symbolically and it is again through the same linked pillars that the story of *al-ṣaghīr* develops. Indeed, the gift of a poem garners the boy's first kiss with his betrothed (294). War approaches, however, and one day, seeking her out to deliver his latest poem, however, the boy cannot find Ḥanūn. Hearing mortar fire in the distances he rushes around the camp, and finally to his aunt's tent on the edge of the refugee city, which between 1950 and 1967 had turned into a resistance headquarters. Ḥanūn has joined the resistance, and he fears she

is out on an operation against the government. With chaos all around him the boy fears for her life, which has to signify love, family, and freedom all at once. The final chapter (also titled *shahāda*) is written from the frantic point of view of *al-ṣaghīr*. He announces to his aunt that he will fly [*yaṭir*] to find Ḥanūn, and then the boy is said to fly around the field, observing its destruction, happy to see that none of his own birds are there, and hoping that Ḥanūn will also be free from danger, that she be taught caution and no more. Caught amid the frenzy, the boy "cannot find a place to land;" there is no safe space. Finally—as if in a dream narrative, flying above the field he knows so well, the boy is said to find a hole in the earth to rest. He does not rest, however, "I slept," and in his sleep he dreams. He dreams that he finds Ḥanūn, and as birds, the fly up into the sky (332). In death, the symbols of the boy come together, merging with the image of the martyr and making the three-pillared world view a specifically national one.

The logic of the boy–a love for birds, for family, and for Ḥanūn—and his idea of *how* to love all three has thus taken him from life to death. He has created a particular value set, a logic that extends to each and every element of his life. For the story of the boy, which becomes a national story, it is these three elements and the way they have become intertwined that is a national logic. Bringing him across the threshold of the womb into the world, across the Jordan River following Ḥanūn's family from Dhueisheh to Wiḥdāt, and through the wake of the Nakba to the 1967 defeat, to Black September, birds, family, and Ḥanūn drive the life of the boy. Through time and across borders, the loves of the boy–rather than as breaks in narrative or the moment of change—are constantly figured. There is no before/after, or inside/outside; dominant politics and ways of thinking space, time, and relationships are totally subsumed to the logic of a child, which in turn challenges the problematic structures that he moves within.

While death is the ultimate end of *al-ṣaghīr*, whose society cannot make space for his particular worldview, the boy, just as all of the other children narrators in the Palestine project, "succeed in mapping out for us, the readers, the politics and contradictions"[32] of the world that surrounds them. As innocents, the children bring no political agenda to their reading of life, and rather take the absurdities at face value, and integrate the symbols and structures of life into a worldview that challenges in confronting prevailing norms.

The forgotten

While many of the novels of the Palestine project tackle the 'dominant' sites of the nation, they also cast light on forgotten locations, and forgotten moments. In the modern period, what Palestine is and what it means has been a located debate that has all too frequently re-located as geopolitics shifts and changes. From Jerusalem to Gaza City in the early days after the fall of the Mandate and the declaration of the State of Israel, stable locations that claimed to represent Palestine were many and changing.[33] This was exacerbated in the wake of 1967 and the further fragmentation of Palestine, which became variously 'centred' (at least in terms of the location of international debate, of government, and of military action) in Jordan until Black September, in Lebanon until the Civil War, and in Tunis until the establishment of government in Ramallah. Even this trajectory was interrupted, however, with the Intifadas in the West Bank and Gaza, or the double expulsion of Palestinians from Iraq and then Syria. How Palestine has been debated, included in narrative and recognised has to a great extent moved from one conflict to the next, one newspaper headline to the other.

While recognizing this multi-cited Palestine is one step to grappling with its complex whole, to only include the sites where belonging or identity are being actively (or, most actively) debated on the world scene is to ignore the on-going developments in all of the sites of Palestine simultaneously. Indeed, it is also to ignore the impact of politics on the lives of the forgotten. Nowhere is this more palpable than in the story of Manār, the heroine of *Shurfat al-'ār* (2010). Not only is her story within the *Shurafāt*, where the focus is on structures of power and representation that undergird and overpower the national frame and not on the spaces of the nation, but her experience of life in Amman is for the most part portrayed in pan-national terms. Set in Jordan in 2008-9, the dedication at the start of the novel is to the women victims of 'honour crimes' and "to women everywhere" the novel is described as a work "in defense of the right of the victims for love, life, freedom and hope" (5).

At once claiming to not be a national story, and addressing a regional if not global phenomenon of violence against women and honour crimes (*jara'im al-sharaf*) in particular, the novel sets up a fascinating paradigm of the forgotten Palestinian story. The story of Manār is the story of a woman, and precisely because it is not overtly claimed as a national one, it is able to illustrate the culpability of the national frame in her abuse, and illustrate

how that which is not claimed as national (the forgotten stories of the nation) must also be taken into account when imagining the nation. So when Manār's uncle finds out that she has been raped and is pregnant, he marches over to their home with a black swatch of cloth and nails it over the door. As he does, he announces: "This banner is not coming down from its place unless the spirit of that fallen woman who contaminated the honour of the family is cinched" (182), and it is not simply the phenomenon of honour killing that he draws attention to. The banner meant to represent Manār's shame is thrice, however, confused with "those many black banners that were strung up on the edges of balconies and doors of the homes and shops and trucks mourning the Gaza martyrs" (193). So while the eyes of the world are on Gaza amid the 2008-2009 onslaught that forms the backdrop to Manār's story, and while the novel makes a structural parallel between the failures to protect the Palestinians in the coastal enclave and women across the Arab world, it also reads Manār as a Palestinian woman whose experience of trauma is not claimed as a national one. Just as Randa reconsiders Umm Saʿd as a paradigm of Palestinian womanhood, so too does *al-ʻĀr* shed light on some of the myriad experiences that are not part of the national discourse.

It is thus that the otherwise ordinary life of a poor family struggling for stability becomes a national one. "In Jordan, where this novel was written, the official numbers of women killed in honor crimes is 15-20 each year," (5) Naṣrallāh writes in the preface, adding numbers of dead in Lebanon, in Iraq, and globally. The stress, in the preface and through the paralleling of Manār with the dead of Gaza, is that this is at once a Palestinian story, a personal story, and a global phenomenon. Without the link to the banners of the Gaza dead, Manār's first steps, prepared for while her family "encouraged her as if she were a soccer player on their national team" (39), and when taken were cheered for as though she was "on the way to a goal for the virtue of her country" (42), might simply be the story of a child growing up. As the victim of an honour killing though, Manār becomes the story of those 15-20 women each year killed in Jordan, or one of the 5,000 killed each year worldwide (5). The novel works simultaneously to link Manār's 'case' to the national and the international, all the while continuing to insist that it is a deeply individual story about the murder of a young woman. The link between Manār and Gaza comes most forcefully through the image of the black banner that her uncle hangs above the home. Whenever the banner is mentioned, Gaza is invoked, and the violence done to one can be read as double.

The first time the connection is made between the symbols is when ʿIsām comes to for Manār in marriage. After the rape she had stopped returning his calls, and he believed that it was because he failed to do the 'honorable thing' and ask her to marry rather than continue dating. He does not know about the rape and pregnancy, and ascends into her home walking beneath the black banner and assuming that it is there to mourn the Gaza dead. When he brings up the issue of marriage, however, he is told that the banner signifies the fate of Manār:

> Did you not see the black banner over the door?
> I saw it, it's not mourning the martyrs in Gaza?
> Oh son, Manār is dead.
> Died, how?
> How people die my son, how people die. (195-6)

On his way out, ʿIsām looked at the banner and "for a moment he wanted to put his hand up and rip it from its place and throw it to the end of the earth, but he didn't dare" (197). As a representative of the middle class system, ʿIsām has done too little too late to help Manār, or indeed to help Gaza. Indeed, assuming it was a symbol of the war and its aftermath he had simply walked right past it. Out of sight, the Gaza dead play little part in ʿIsām's life, which he continues living even after leaving the house without knowing exactly what has happened to Manār, and prepared to do nothing about it.

The police, on the other hand, rip off the banner when Manār is taken into protective custody, signifying their forceful rhetoric and claims to have the solution to Manār's situation. The police, as representatives of the state, are all hot air, however, and merely perpetuate the problem by incarcerating the young and pregnant woman, who is—in police custody—raped a second time. At the hands of the state, then, Manār has no protection, and in fact claims to a solution only make matters worse. Just like the failure of a global middle class to save Gaza from its destruction, so too did the state as an institution fail to protect. Once again the structures that fail Manār are the same that fail the people of Gaza, where the eyes of the international community are glued. The family structure does no better in the end, helpless to act amid forces more powerful. Indeed, to save face with Manār's third brother, who returns home for a visit and asks about the banner, her mother insists:

> Manār is well, this banner is like the many banners you see like it that people raise mourning the souls martyred in Gaza. Most of them have lowered the banners, but this one remains as you see. (219)

It is only later that the brother learns about the rape, and the plan to send Manār to Dubai with him and his family; a plan that was also destined to fail.

In playing with the symbolism that links Manār to the nation, her experience becomes national, inscribing the space of Amman in the first decade of the millennium into the national narrative, even though all eyes were on Gaza. Her story, the parallel asserts, is no less a national tragedy than the 1,440 killed in 21 days of bombardment (or indeed those killed in the bombardments since).[34] The story that *al-ʿĀr* tells is of another simultaneity. It inscribes the forgotten locations and moments of Palestinian experience into the national story, and also allows them to be at once less and more than a national story. Amidst the push-and-pull of claiming and rejecting the national as a part of the narrative, her story reveals the same dynamic at work within the new national frame. In an inter-textual nation, it is at once that which is claimed as national and that which is not that make up a wider community. It is not only the Palestinians in Gaza in 2008-9 whose lives and deaths make up the nation, and it is not only the nation that determines the course of their lives.

Chapter 6 – Re-writing Palestinian 'heroes'

As the 'mother of the fighter' as a national symbol is challenged by the complex female characters in Naṣrallāh's Palestine project, so too is the image of the fighter himself. The portrayals of corrupt, conniving, conflicted and converted fighters not only diversify the calcified symbol, but show how the model became its own structure of power that—just as the nation-state paradox, gender norms, or imperial structures—has to be overcome in order to represent the nation. The Palestinian fighter as national hero became trapped in the figure of the *fidaʾi,* "a paragon of idealized masculinity whose valiant and hallowed struggle against the enemy is such that he is regarded as a 'prophet'."[35] The idealized *fidaʾi*, even when it was an accurate representation of the qualities of an individual, was still unable to accommodate shifts in personality or external politics, and assumed a narrow definition of

resistance and liberation. Not only did the figure of the *fidaʾi* imprison those men who were valiant fighters, it also shaped the discourse around national resistance to the exclusion of other models.

Even Yasīn, the protagonist in *Taḥta shams*, who is celebrated as the returned fighter who has run missions for the PLO from Ajloun to Beirut and back to Ramallah and who has carried a gun for the national cause, sees the problem of the glorified fighter. As a young admirer turns his heroic past into a play, the aging fighter grows angry and questions the motive for immortalizing these experiences:

> In truth, all heroes are like each other. Try for example to tell the story of Nimr on its own, or of Umm Walīd on her own, or of Nuʿmān, and what would happen? They would all become the main character and I would be secondary. Do you understand now the meaning of a story? And how can you manufacture one with the flip of a hand? (158)

Challenging the construction of the roles of Palestinian men, the exclusion of women, the limits of the heroic, and the many other ways of being brave—or not, but at the same time national—is perhaps the most crucial thread in the series beyond the re-imagining of the national itself.

The works of the Palestine project treat the concept of the national hero as a structure of power. In fact, the hero figure *was* a structure of power, and one built along the same problematic lines of the nation-state. As Laleh Khalili has remarked, just as the nation-state was read teleologically, the figure of the fighter was subjected to the same process. The image of the hero, then, "insists on interpreting all past events teleologically as the epic process of revolutionary courage and envisions nationalist history hurtling towards an inevitable victory."[36] This pre-determined trajectory falls victim to the same problematics of the national history that was so impossible for a Palestinian nation to imagine given its diversity. Just like the other structures addressed by the two series, the concept is first challenged, then made flexible; responsive to the diverse and changing realities of the community. Once the figure of the hero and its powerful symbolism is subsumed within the national discourse (again, rather than restricting what is possible), alternatives can be explored.

First, then, the works of the Palestine project offer an entire spectrum of male and female characters that take on the problematic construct of the national hero and the image of the fighter/martyr. These challenges to the norm "in a society that values social consensus and collective action based on primary forms of solidarity," through the collective support and perpetuation of symbols like the national hero, were most often dismissed as "'individual' concerns or expressions of discontent" that were socially "perceived as disloyal and disruptive."[37] In telling the best and the worst of the *fida'i*, and exposing the abuse of the figure within the national sphere, the problem of the calcified symbol becomes collective, and the drive to re-think the model a national one. Just as the writing of a national narrative meant the imagination of a nation was necessarily broken down and re-constructed through a more responsive model, national signifiers developed within the problematic frame of the nation were also subject to re-development.

Corrupted symbol

In *Zaytūn*, Salwā's experiences of abuse and abandonment challenge the narrative of unity and heroism perpetuated during the revolutionary period of the Lebanese camps.[38] Not only did Salwā's friends, neighbours, and family ignore her pleas for help, they were wilfully lied to by officials manipulating the myth of the hero as Palestine's saviour and allowed Salwā's abuse to continue simply to avoid challenging the paradigm. This is because it was precisely this paradigm of the fighter and the hero that were being mobilized in order to facilitate Salwā's abuse.

The official who rapes her makes his first visits under the pretext of support for the widow of a martyr. Her fiancé Ayman has just been killed. Having not long before joined the Palestinian resistance, his death is cast as martyrdom, despite Salwā's insistence that it was her uncle who murdered him out of jealousy. The official later makes repeated visits on the pretext of showing support for the 'widow' of a martyr, and the abuse begins. To gain her uncle's consent, the official grants him favours, and gives the family money, ostensibly to support their 'steadfastness.' When Salwā asserts that she doesn't want the money, her uncle again mobilizes national symbolism, saying that with the money, they could "finally give Ayman a proper tomb" (129). The visits continued. "After a long time of visits [by her rapist], and despite the fact that they were at night, every stone in the neighbourhood sensed

what was happening," (138) but no one did anything. When Salwā screamed, no one came to her aid. She tells ʿAbd al-Raḥmān that it was as though "my teeth were stuck together, no, my teeth had melted, one into the other" (132) metaphorically trapping the screams in her throat, even though she knew the neighbours were aware of the abuse.

When questioned about the presence of the camp official in the home with Salwā, her uncle explains it only as an honour: "The official came to visit us once, twice, three, I don't know how many times now; it was the biggest gift I've received in my life, the biggest gift a poor family like ours could have been granted" (54). By mobilizing the idea of official support for a widow of the resistance, his questionable access to Salwā is not only excused but congratulated. It is as if the legitimacy of the official is bestowed on the family through his visits, and in declaring Salwā the widow of a martyr she is roped into a national story that makes her abuse impossible. This nationalist narrative, *Zaytūn* shows, has little room for Salwā, her rape, and the abuse of camp officials. Her story is constantly questioned in relation to the national, and excuses for her abuse are also framed or legitimated using nationalist symbols.

People heard Salwā's screams, her confessions of rape. However, the problem was that no frame existed within which her screams could be heard. To hear Salwā would mean that intra-Palestinian abuse would have to be absorbed into the national narrative. There was no way of calling out the abuse without challenging the Palestinian story, since the only frame for injury or harm was through the symbol of the martyr, and to call out one Palestinian for the death or injury of another was impossible. This was how, working within the paradigms of Palestinian national symbols, Salwā's abusers made it so that challenging their abuse would be challenging the very idea of a Palestinian nation. Though the image of the hero/fighter/martyr was constructed as a way to counter images of Palestinians as weak or destitute, for Salwā, the image is used in order to keep her silent. Once established, "access to these opposite views were more difficult,"[39] and the idea of the national hero as a fighter and a martyr quickly became what Said had termed "a disciplinary communications apparatus"[40] and established as a paradigm within Palestinian narrative and discourse. With the ideal of the national hero operating as a "communications apparatus," the power of the heroic narrative meant that it "streamline[d] a cacophonous and eventful history into a unified nationalist narrative."[41]

As leaders and henchmen of the Palestinian resistance, to question their authority would be to question the very outlines of the national project. Constructed on the basic premise that attaining freedom and liberation would rescue "Manhood and honour lost in the humiliation of defeat to the adversary," [42] the national project could only be enacted through "militant mobilization, and a new man–with all the sublimated gender discourse this term implies."[43] The resulting figuration of the fighter who could liberate the nation created "discursive mutual dependency between nationalism and hegemonic masculinity."[44] The result was the figure of the fighter, who was all of and only: "armed, beautiful and confident running on the crest of hills."[45]

Eventually Salwā goes to the local sheikh seeking help, and explains that the official "built me a special room to…" and she could not finish the sentence. But the message is clear. Horrified, the sheikh replied: "God save us, to violate you in" (177). The shocked official marches over to Salwā's uncle's home to shame him into stopping the abuse. Her uncle stares down the sheikh with his feet up on the table. He is confident that the political position granted to him by the official who rapes Salwā, as thanks for his access (46-7), will ensure that he is safe from any allegation. When the sheikh realizes the political heft of the guilty official, and the privilege accorded the uncle for supporting him, he simply walks away. The sheikh, despite his initial horror at Salwā's story of abuse, is either unable or unwilling to challenge it. The myth of the national hero silenced Salwā, as it had silenced the sheikh, and as it has silenced each of her neighbours. The figure of the hero, of the national leader, has created a prison not only for Salwā but for the entire community as well.

The national not only imprisons Salwā, but her insistence on challenging this paradigm of authority is also what sees her killed. At the close of the novel, the young woman is murdered by the very figures of the national who claim to be fighting for her freedom. Her death closes the narrative of *Zaytūn*. It functions as a painful, measured call to action. It asks why the trauma and heroism of a young woman abused by Palestinian officials is any less national than that of a fighter who is killed by enemy fire. Standing on the roof of her home, Salwā is pushed off by one of the guards of the camp official. She does not die when she hits the ground. In turns, the guard, her uncle, and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān pick up her broken body and carry it again to the roof, until a final impact ends her life:

> Salwā fell for a long time, and there was no ground beneath her.

-One of us has to wake up now Salwā [someone said]
[…]
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān saw her looking toward him, he backed away quickly
[…]
-If she fell on me I'd be killed
One of [the guards] screamed from the top of the building: Is she dead?
[…]
He screamed: not yet
They went quickly up the stairs
Carrying her
They helped her over a second time
The official's cars turned around
They reached the edge of the roof. The dropped her. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān was careful to make sure that she fell far from him this time
They screamed
-Is she dead?
He examined her, there was no blood, there was nothing but her eyes staring at him.
He screamed: Not yet
He felt he was living a moment stripped of everything
The went to walk up the stairs again
Carrying her
It was as if they would never get tired, they arrived quickly to the edge of the roof. They let go of her, and before she reached the earth, they screamed to him
-Is she dead?
- Dead?
- … … ! (203)

The gruesome scene demands the question: why can Salwā's murders can be part of the national imaginary and she cannot. Not only are Salwā's killers manipulating emerging nationalist imagery for their own gain, but they are actively transgressing and 'defiling' the idea of the hero at the same time as they defile Salwā. By shifting the focus from the narrative of the national hero to the problem that this heroic framework presents in narrating Salwā, it is the young woman's own bravery and that of her teacher who advocates for her, that are described in heroic terms. Salwā's eventual murder by the very 'heroes' and leaders of the national movement serves at once to reveal the problem of developing a dominant (and dominating) national discourse.

Telling her story brings into the national story not only figures who abuse the narrative, but also those who challenge that abuse. In this doubled critique, national symbols are revealed as oppressive and at the same time a mechanism for expanding that symbol by situating it

within a wider discourse. To imagine the national community, then, is to imagine heroes and sexual predators in heroic garb. Just as imagining the nation in its diverse locations allows for a simultaneity of national experiences without seeing one eclipse or overpower the other, so too does the corrupt hero take his place alongside the image of the fighter. As two variations of the national symbol, the dominance of the symbol is fractured, but the idea of the hero does not disappear. This makes space to endow national "meaning to daily violent deaths"[46] beyond those 'martyred' by enemies of the national. It allows a reading of Salwā's death as 'national' as well, coming as it does at the hands of national figures.

The figure of the hero was manipulated in order to ensure that the dominant remained dominant. For Salwā, this meant her abuse could not be stopped. As a woman, an orphan, and a refugee, she was at the mercy of the national structure as the only one that would claim to represent her, even though it did not. It is not only those who do not fit the profile of the hero who do not fare well under its dominance, however. *Ṭifl*'s Fūʿad is the paragon of manliness. With broad shoulders and a bristling moustache, he is read in heroic terms almost from birth. This 'reading' totally overlooks any of Fūʿad's actual strengths or weaknesses, overwriting him as the official had overwritten Salwā. More than this, however, the figure of the hero that everyone—from his family to the British Legion to the Arab Liberation Army—expects him to fill actually prevents the young man from engaging with the world on his own terms. His life and the expectations of society are totally mediated by the image of the hero. The gulf between this expectation and Fūʿad's reality is so stark as to be farcical. This not only exposes the violence of the hero as a structure, but also reveals the problem of the symbol once it becomes part of a network of power. Through a reading of Fūʿad, the roots of the association between the masculine, the fighter, and the powerful are disentangled. It also sheds light on Salwā's experience, revealing the central problem of the corrupted symbol as the point at which that symbol becomes a structure of power.

The false link between symbols and power first emerges in the spectre of Fūʿad's moustache. Playing off the old adage "a man's honour lies in his moustache,"[47] and of bristle as a sign of power and prestige, the hapless Fūʿad happens to be endowed with substantial, shining, facial hair. It is so impressive, that the day he is sent off from the village to the British Legion, no one cared that he wept with fear and sadness because

everyone was too busy admiring the young man's good looks. As the narrator remarks, "no one saw the tear [that fell from your eye] because their gazes—all of them—were on the thick and substantial moustache sitting atop your lip like the sign of a person who was more than his age" (43). The combination of this moustache with his "towering stature" and "elegant" looks mean Fūʿad cuts an intimidating figure as he enters the military camp. Taking these physical manifestations of symbolic masculinity at face value, the recruits also treat Fūʿad with deference. One even gives up the bottom bunk so Fūʿad can sleep as far away from the floor as possible, fearing that the dirt will adversely affect his masculine purity, and somehow instinctively feeling that the low level of the bunk will conflict with what is perceived as a 'high' stature to all he encounters. Fūʿad is a hero, even though he has never done anything heroic. He just has no idea what he is doing at the military camp, and presumes the way he is treated is the way everyone is treated.

Appearance is also what gets Fūʿad stationed at the Sayīd al-bilād's headquarters, where he is admired as an excellent soldier –who has never in fact seen combat—by those coming to visit the mayor. A gift from the British, Fūʿad is meant to prop up power by not only wearing a British uniform, but by sporting his glossy moustache. The Spanish Ambassador even asks Fūʿad during his first week as guard, "how do you take care of it and keep its shape—your impressive moustache—all of the time?" to which the ever-hapless solder responds: "maybe it's because I've never shaved it, ever" (104). What for Fūʿad is simply physical—they may as well be complimenting his ears—is read as though a badge of honour, a signifier of inevitable success. This, of course, reveals the hollowness of the symbol, and in turn the hollowness of the structures that raise the moustachioed solider within their ranks simply so they can look like they are in control.

Beyond the moustache, which persists as an empty symbol of a power that Fūʿad does not possess, events conspire to endow *Ṭifl*'s protagonist with a second symbol: a brand new firearm. Handed to him as part of his guard duties, the British-made rifle is purely symbolic. Shot only once during the course of the novel, it represents rather than enacts the violent and domineering possibility of Fūʿad and the systems he is co-opted by. In all likelihood given to the Sayīd al-bilād by the British as part of their policy of proxy control and appeasement; it is handed to Fūʿad for much the same reason. Meant to bestow status, the mint-condition weapon is handed to the corporal both to increase Fūʿad's power, as well as

the status of the Sayīd. Indeed, in communicating his decision to let Fūʿad take an open vacation and join the ALA, the Sayīd gives his soldier the gun to take with him, with the condition: "all I want from you is to return victorious" (158). However, the Transjordanian government was hampered by commitments to the British, and with its army controlled by the British it could hardly enter Palestine before the British left.[48] At the same time, popular sentiment demanded that the government take action, so handing over British arms to the favourite soldier on the promise of a victory in Palestine meant using the ALA—under the command of Lebanese and Syrian officials with arms and support from Jordan—as a supra-national and Pan-Arab body, which overcame the weakness of the supposedly sovereign Transjordan.[49]

The scene, one cannot help but notice, is the precise opposite of one that Ghassān Kanafānī made emblematic of the Palestinian resistance in 1967. His collection of works *Of men and guns* (*'An al-rijāl wa al-banādiq*) begins with the story of Manṣūr in "The Child Borrows his uncle's gun and goes to Safad" where the child begs his uncle for the old man's even older Turkish gun.[50] Manṣūr, however, is told that he is not a man, but a child, and will not make it even halfway to the battle in Safad. But Manṣūr persists and in his persistence, his work, and thwarting the "authoritative structures, [that] are being radically modified by the forces of circumstance and the political coming of age of the child"[51] he becomes a fighter. The cost of this persistence is the death of Manṣūr's father in battle. The young boy, now a fighter, must stand "in the wet emptiness watching his father slowly dying, impotent and unmoving"[52] as he clutches at the gun. For Manṣūr, becoming a man and taking possession of a gun come at a painful price that only strengthens his resolve. As status symbol rather than tool the gun, even more than the moustache, encapsulates the problems of power and authority. Where Manṣūr suffers and shows great courage when he takes up the role of the fighter, which later becomes glorified and celebrated, Fūʿad seeks only the glory and none of the hardships. Indeed, although he to a great extent remains a child, he is read as a 'man' and a fighter.

The problem with the ideal of the fighter, then, is that it erases the specificity of the individual. Manṣūr remains a child, even though he is holding a gun and fighting for his homeland. Fūʿad too remains a child; one who does not even know how to carry arms, or know the pain of loss that spurred Manṣūr to action. So although Kanafānī wrote of the

story of Manṣūr becoming a fighter, that he "wished to sketch the appearance on the horizon of men and guns, which—together—will portray the missing scene in this collection,"[53] that return never comes. The paradigm of the fighter coined in Kanafānī's age of Beirut (if it was not coined by Kanafānī's work itself), however, would fail to bring about that "missing scene" of return. What the experience of Fūʿad, Manṣūr, and of the PLO officer in Salwā's story reveal, is that it is not the figure "of men and guns" that will liberate the homeland. Because the vision of the fighter became a structure of power in its own right—and not simply a resistance movement—Fūʿad was able to embody the outward signifiers, while its ethos was lost.[54]

It is not just that Fūʿad is weak, naïve, or incapable, however. The problem of the fighter is that it has become—in the hands of those who control it—an empty signifier. It is not a man with a gun who will liberate a nation, but rather sensitivity and determination that—in the figure of Manṣūr, and again in Fūʿad—is overwritten by structures more powerful then themselves. So, where Manṣūr picked up a gun and became a fighter through perseverance, Fūʿad was:

> unable to carry the rifle on your own; it was very heavy on your shoulder, those shoulders that could not have been described as weak any day, your shoulders that could carry the stars that no one else could carry. You felt it was long, touching the earth from time to time despite your tall stature. (159)

Fūʿad is not so much raised up as a hero as he is saddled with the idea. He does not see the revolutionary potential in any of the symbols of resistance. Even the gun. For the British Legion and later ALA fighter, however, the power of the gun is in its beauty as a machine, and never the possibility of resistance. Fūʿad's love of weaponry is purely of the scientific sort, and in the British Legion he becomes obsessed with cleaning the camp's rifles and keeping them in working order, almost as museum pieces. They, like him, are only for show; the emblems of power exhibited by a structure that claims to exercise it. Just as everyone saw in Fūʿad the image of the fighter, when the solider is given a shining new weapon that had been touched by only three people "the man who made it, the Sayīd al-bilād, and himself" (153), "In truth, in that English gun you saw precisely the model that all guns should be" (152). The gulf between the appearance of power in Fūʿad's broad shoulders and his thick moustache is put into stark contrast with his actual abilities to realize the role of the hero. The signifier—that which a hero is supposed to be—has

become totally detached from what the hero is supposed to signify: resistance and liberation. Once it is adopted by structures of power, the liberatory potential of the idea of the hero is lost.

Even more problematic are the rivalries that stem from competing heroic claims. Kanafānī's vision of the hero made no provision for competing claims to 'most heroic,' or the vying for power and authority through the figure of the hero that ensures when an image becomes a national symbol. For his part, Fūʿad is seen as a threat by many of the commanders he encounters, and as he heads toward the front, he "became one of the famous, no the heroes, before you were given a chance" (186). On this account, his direct superior sets out to undermine Fūʿad and keep him out of military action so there is not chance for him to be upstaged. Rivalry, pride, and empty sentiment thus collude to prevent Fūʿad from participating in the fighting, even if he wouldn't have been very good at it. Predictably, when his unit is ambushed, the hero does not perform heroically: "it all happened swiftly, with a swiftness you couldn't imagine, they opened fire, they advanced, and you fired your first bullet … it was your first and your last" (220). The battle for Jerusalem, it seems, was only ever symbolic.

Not only has belief in these hollow symbols lost Jerusalem for the ALA and the Palestinians who put their faith in it, but an unquestioning faith in the meaning of empty symbols also does psychological violence to Fūʿad. The naïve boy and soldier who believes he is powerful because this is what he has been told has a mental breakdown when he can no longer reconcile man and myth. Fūʿad wanders the Jerusalem countryside trying to find his way back to Amman. He is totally lost when he stumbles on a pool of water. Stopping to drink and wash his face, Fūʿad finds himself staring into the poof "and you found [your reflection] but you did not recognize it … you began to search for something clear that hadn't changed, something you couldn't shake from its roots and return to its image, but you couldn't" (270). Having totally bought into and remained uncritical of the prevailing symbol of masculinity and assured victory, Fūʿad himself becomes hollow. Returning to Amman he spends his days guarding the door of the mayor, and his nights sitting fixedly in front of a mirror, waiting for what he is told is true, to become so. Fūʿad is not quite a victim of the myth of the hero, however, since he has utterly failed at being critical of the systems that used him as their mascot; he simply enjoyed the privileges that this earned him.

The real victim of the hero myth in the story of Fūʿad, the narrator intimates, was Palestine. Lost in the battles of 1948, Palestinians, just like Fūʿad, relied on the rhetoric of the ALA invested in their symbols. The hollow hero figure could only bury the villagers of Deir Yasin, a task that was simply a stop on the road for still-sought-after glory.

As long as the national hero was a myth controlled by structures of power, and indeed when it came to be a structure of power itself during the days of Beirut, it was inflexible, and read over the realities of Palestine rather than responding to them. The symbol as a calcified myth adopted by institutions had become corrupt, and enforced limitations on what it was possible to be as a Palestinian. Recognizing the corruption of the symbol through the writing of distasteful and tragically comical representatives wrote the demise of the power of the hero-fighter into the Palestine project, and into the national imaginary. Once the image of the hero is disassociated from structures of power within the inter-textual nation—once it becomes just one part of the nation, subsumed and not subsuming—the task to re-envision the hero can be taken on.

Liberating a myth

> [Khālid] had turned into something of a legend, a story told by young and old alike, to the point that some thought he actually was nothing more than a legend.
>
> *–Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍāʾ*[55]

What emerges from the Palestine project is an urgent re-writing of the national hero. Not only do its truly heroic characters with hindsight ultimately fail at securing freedom or sovereignty for their communities (though their small victories are greatly celebrated), but being trapped in the prison of the heroic figure ultimately means that the men (they are all men) are not free themselves. In the most epic of the Palestine project novels for example, *Zaman al-khuyūl al-bayḍāʾ* (2007, trans. *Time of White Horses*, 2012), readers follow as its hero turns from man into myth. This comes at a price. Where the narrative of the hero's young life begins as Khālid falls in love and comes of age, once he has become a local hero, he is reduced to the figure of a "phantom atop the hill" (147), seen by enemies as a "Silhouette, which blended with that of his horse, both frightening and mysterious" (146). He would become an icon, but his fiancée's father cancels the engagement because his heroic acts have put Khālid and his family at risk of reprisals. It is as if being an individual and being a hero are two mutually exclusive roles. Once a hero, and "Now that he had

become larger than life, it was an easy thing for girls to fall in love with him" (152), but it would never be the young woman he fell in love with as an innocent youth. His first love, the one that was lost to his heroic stature, was the one that he would always cherish, but it was reduced to a memory "he would later bring to mind to banish sorrow when it took him unawares, and when joy embraced him, to experience it in all its fullness" (101). To live, to love, and to be a hero are—when it comes to the epic—mutually exclusive endeavours. It is this tension that the Palestine project identifies and re-considers.[56]

In the Palestine project's re-writing of the hero it looks at how the individual chooses to act and why, taking away the mythic quality of characters that perform heroic deeds. In looking at the human minutia behind the hero, the novels explore what it means to read someone who perfectly embodies the (problematic) values and ideals of a national liberator as someone who also "plays or gets angry or listens to music or goes to the bathroom" (*A'rās āmina,* 61). In letting the hero be all of these things, and allowing their own experiences of heroism to re-colour the meaning of the national hero, a more complex framework for the national signifier emerges. By putting the image of the fighter into direct contact with the fighter as a human being, and making space for both within the imagined nation, the prison of the hero is opened, and—as the novels suggest—a certain kind of previously illusive freedom is won in the process.

This is the particular case in *Taḥta shams*, where the work's narrative structure is built around the exploration of the heroic figure and its function in Ramallah society in the post-Oslo era. It builds on the image of the corrupt leader developed in *Zaytūn* and *Ṭifl*, in the character of al-Duktūr (The Doctor). Known only by his title, the director of an internationally funded children's theatre traverses Ramallah and Jerusalem as if he owns them, and takes on his nickname "as if the title was what he had been waiting for from the moment of his birth" (25). If in post-Oslo Ramallah "the people [were] divided into two groups: that of the select who rule and steal, and that of the majority which complains and searches for someone to save it,"[57] than al-Duktūr is surely in the first, and represents perhaps the worst of the problems of a new Palestinian leadership in his actions, and the way he uses rhetoric to manipulate others.[58]

From his first appearance in the novel, al-Duktūr is portrayed as a corrupt, conniving, misogynist whose quest for power and dominance involves stepping over men, women, and

the national cause. Though he runs a children's theatre in Ramallah, and declares "we will perform even it is for only one child, it's our duty!" (26), his commitment to either the national cause or the welfare of children quickly comes into question. When the child playing a lead role – a talking bird—in his latest production is killed in the street by the Israeli army, al-Duktūr declares that the play will go on, "not for the blood of the bird we lost today, but for all of the small birds of this country!" (26). He later announces that money will be sent to the family of the child, and though he collects cash, it is never sent (27); the intimation is that he keeps it for himself. This incident, the first a reader sees of al-Duktūr, sets the pattern of his behaviour: a man who manipulates the national cause for his own ends, and puts others down in the process. The nation for al-Duktūr becomes an apparatus of enforcement, so others are made subservient to his aims in the name of the nation.

The awful figure of the official is highlighted through his relationship with Salīm, a young man who grew up in Ramallah, but whose family has all moved abroad, leaving him disconnected in a changing city that became the de facto capital of a reinvented 'Palestinian territory.' Feeling alone and disconnected, Salīm finds meaning and a 'national' role for himself at the theatre run by al-Duktūr. Here he can act, sing, and feel that he is lifting the spirits of a Palestinian community. Constantly put down by al-Duktūr, however, Salīm feels small, powerless, and insignificant, without a part to play in the national drama unfolding with the new government in the West Bank and Gaza. When Salīm meets Yasīn, a retired fighter who has returned to the West Bank, he is in awe.

Unlike Salīm, who grew up in a relatively comfortable middle class home in a West Bank under Israeli military rule, Yasīn joined the resistance. His life story includes episodes from the forests of Ajloun in northern Jordan, where the PLO fighters would train, to Tel al-Zaatar camp, to the suburbs of Beirut. He has been imprisoned by Israel, held up under torture, exiled from his homeland and managed to return. Yasīn's life story is the story of the hero, the fighter, "armed, beautiful and confident, running on the crest of hills."[59] For Salīm, this represents the pinnacle of belonging, and the guarantee of a place in the nation unmolested by al-Duktūr and his ilk. Seeking to trade on the myth of Yasīn—and through this assert his independence from the theatre director—the young man suggests to the former fighter that he write a play about his life experiences. Not only does Yasīn balk at

Salīm's suggestion he does not even particularly want to tell his story to the aspiring playwright, preferring to keep his past and his feelings to himself. When the latter insists, and promises that the play will only be performed once, and in his adopted village outside of Ramallah, the aging fighter consents.

In creating the play about Yasīn, Salīm subordinates all of the many elements of the man into the single idea of the national hero. The resulting monologue—which does not, because it cannot, portray the fighter amongst a wider society alongside other characters—projects a man that has a place in the nation, who is confident, and brave: all of the things that Salīm feels he is not. Put down by al-Duktūr, Salīm's stage character is masculine without being misogynist, belongs to society despite his exile (where Salīm does not feel he belongs even though he was born in Ramallah), and uses his authority and power for the cause of the nation without putting others down. The character is perfect, and –like the ubiquitous figure of the national hero—constructed more as a bulwark against oppression than the imagination of a liberated (or liberating) community member. One theatregoer puts it succinctly, when the play is eventually performed (without Yasīn's permission) in Ramallah. An adoring fan declares that watching the performed life of the hero made her and her friends feel, "as if we are on top of the occupation and not underneath it" (87). The trappings of statehood under the early years of the Oslo Accords are thus criticized by the play. Meant to be the "recognized and recognizable trappings"[60] of the nation and give the illusion of autonomy and self-determination, both play and Palestinian Authority serve only as reactions or mitigation, and not alternatives.

This static Yasīn, whose image theatregoers cling to as a symbol of national resistance, comes into sharp contrast with the way that the aging fighter has imagined himself, which brings him into conflict with Salīm. The triple conflict between the three characters is thus based almost solely on the use and abuse of the idea of the fighter as a national symbol. During one confrontation, Yasīn calls the play's characterization of him de-humanizing:

> You transformed me until I became a hero that has no meaning; I'm just the hero because I have a story, written or performed or published in a newspaper or in a book. Everyone could be a hero, any of those who fill the streets: children, women or sheikhs each of them could be heroes if they had a story. I was like them until I had a story told about me. (158)

Where Yasīn sees the national significance in the story of every Palestinian (including Salīm), the playwright can only reproduce a dominant narrative. On several occasions Yasīn tries to explain to Salīm why the play is problematic, but the playwright cannot hear him, seeing neither the play nor Yasīn as anything other than vehicles by which he can get out from under the thumb of al-Duktūr. This gives insight not only into the kind of power that al-Duktūr wields, but also into how it is reproduced, and re-configured, and ultimately how the symbol of the fighter restricts the possibilities for not only each of the men, but the wider community they are a part of.

The showing of the play coincides with Yasīn's re-arrest by Israel's military, leaving Salīm with full control over the figure of the fighter. "Yasīn's absence planted in Salīm a strange feeling of freedom: that the performance was his alone" (63), since the complexity of the ma no longer interfered with the performance of the role. In taking on the role of the hero, however, Salīm's own self gradually disappears. Rather than be horrified at the prospect of Yasīn's inevitable torture at the hands of the occupying forces, Salīm breathes a sigh of relief at the absence of his muse. He wonders, with a degree of malice, "what if Yasīn was killed in prison, what if they killed him under torture?" (15). He is gruesomely pleased by the idea, which leaves him free to take over the character, which he does, one attribute at a time. First, in order to perfect his character's limp, and then just out of habit, Salīm begins to walk with Yasīn's lilted gait all of the time. At the same time, he ever-more-frequently forgets to remove the grey hair spray and stage makeup that help him mimic the appearance of Yasīn on stage, when he goes home for the night. By now, the play is famous, and "being performed in the heart of Ramallah" (119). Salīm even begins lying about where the inspiration for the play came from, admitting only that "there is something of Yasīn, and there are things from other people, and from me" (134), as if preparing for the total erasure of the man who was the hero.

While the actor and director wage war over control of the national hero, Yasīn simply tries to continue living his life. "In his fifties, stuck between two eras, no longer a young man, but not quite a sheikh" (43). The actual Yasīn provides a stark contrast to the writer and director, but also to the other national heroic figures portrayed in *al-Malhāt*. He is far more self-aware than Khālid, or Fūʿad; his struggle is precisely to live as a man and a hero. A lover, a son, and an exile, Yasīn struggles with his own multiple identities as he works to

integrate into West Bank society. Even the decision to return, however, had been a complex one. After the Oslo Accords "the door to the country was suddenly open" (42), but as he heard of others crossing to the west bank of the Jordan, Yasīn wondered whether in "return to their country, they knew that they were returning to something missing" (43), that fighters would return "out of their time, their place" (44). The 'return' for Yasīn was not a return, since everything had changed, including the returnees themselves. He had decided then that, "I will return only if it is possible for me to establish new memories and always I didn't like people who just returned to their country to die, as through their nation couldn't live if their corpses were not underneath their soil" (43).

The former fighter is utterly opposed to the prevailing national symbolism, feeling sick as others crossing the bridge with him stop and kneel to kiss the ground. Stopped at an Israeli checkpoint on the way to his new home, his old friend notes, "we do not feel the freedom that Ramallah does yet, we are in Area B" (48). He alludes to the carving up of the West Bank and Gaza Strip under the auspices of the Oslo Accords; these would later be seen as undermining any hope of Palestinian self-determination. To this admission of limited freedoms, the narrator adds that Yasīn wanted to say: "now I see why I didn't kiss the earth" (48). The comment goes unspoken, however, but its unvoiced presence hints to the pitfalls of the liberation project, and the work that is yet to be done to see freedom for Yasīn and his family.

And so Yasīn 'returns' to a city he does not know, to faces he does not recognize, and to an occupation that constantly stymies his attempts to live freely. He constantly questions how he—a hero—can continue to live according to the same principles in the new milieu. Indeed, he has returned to a community that is imprisoned by the trappings of the national hero, as it continues to use the idea not only to legitimize proto-statehood, but also as a tool of resistance to an on-going occupation. Where he had carried cash for the PLO to Ajloun, weapons for the resistance to Lebanon, and the body of his stepson out of the ruins of Beirut, in Ramallah, Yasīn's tool was a bouquet of flowers. Before arriving in the village where he will live, Yasīn buys flowers for Umm Walīd. When he and his friend are stopped at a second checkpoint, it is the flowers that the soldiers take issue with. Mocking Yasīn, the soldiers ask if the bouquet is for his wife or his lover, (*khabībatak*, rather than *ḥubībatak*, emphasizing the Hebrew accent of the soldier), and force him to wait while the

car and the flowers are searched. “It was the first time in his life flowers had ever died in his hands” (49); love, it seems, has no place under occupation. While his companion wonders, “if only we hadn’t bought the flowers” (49), Yasīn becomes more determined, and makes sure to fill the home with cut stems every chance he can get. Umm Walīd understands the fighter’s new battle, for “flowers that die quickly were the things that most reminded you to seize the beauty of life” (49); she comments, “You see, it’s only Yasīn who doesn’t get tired of things that are beautiful” (48) It is the same beauty he pursued in Lebanon, in Jordan, just now in a new form. Despite the peace accords, despite the new Palestinian government, for the fighter, it is only “where there are flowers there is some kind of peace” (49), and peace has not yet come to Ramallah.

There is no room for the sensitive Yasīn on stage. Neither, however, does there appear to be space for the timid and talked-down-to Salīm. The image of the fighter takes over both. So, at the same time as the Israeli military imprisons the former fighter, Salīm imprisons himself in the image of the hero. The further away Yasīn is, the more distant his current fight for love, for freedom, and liberation from the new forms of oppression faced by Palestinians in the West Bank. There is no room for this complex fighter, and Yasīn is unable to liberate himself or Ramallah from the myth of the hero. In the end, Yasīn is such a threat to that myth that Salīm (and al-Duktūr) has built his life on, that confronted by the newly released Yasīn, the playwright takes advantage of the violence of the Second Intifada, now in full swing. An explosion outside of the theatre sees Yasīn injured. He is “on the border of death” when Salīm reaches him. Yasīn smiles, thinking he will be rescued. The actor hesitates, then takes out the pistol he had requested from al-Duktūr, “pointed its tip toward the middle of that smile, the shot of the gun exploded, and that smile got wider before it drifted away to nothing” (175). Presented with the chance to rescue Yasīn, to take on the role of the hero in a living sense Salīm chose rather to murder the new hero in favour of the calcified myth.

For Yasīn, the fight was to find a way to feel like he was neither living under or on top of the occupation. Since conditions had changed, and indeed Yasīn himself had changed, for the aging fighter, the meaning of resistance had to change too. Through *Taḥta shams*’ inter-textuality, the character of the fighter, the playwright, and the theatre director become three examples of not only the corruption of the national hero, but also the figure’s liberation.

Through Yasīn, an alternative is inscribed, and the inter-textual nation is able to take the initial figure of the hero into account alongside its new incarnation. Read inter-textually, the three examples explore and express just what the national hero means as a phenomenon. While the 'new hero' may be one that re-imagines the parameters of the myth, and who challenges the prevailing terms of national liberation struggles, this new hero cannot be read without his or her context. Embedded in the idea of the new and liberated hero, is the freedom for national heroic figures to develop according to their circumstances, and to continue in their oppositional stance to power and its structures.

The national hero, then, is all of the parts that go into a national understanding of just what it means to fight for the nation, what this has looked like in the past, as well as the problems and pitfalls in allowing these myths to then dictate community instead of responding to its needs. So, though the now fossilized image of the national hero remains a part of the Palestinian nation as an inter-text, it can no longer constrain those who seek liberation. Inter-textuality thus liberates national images from their structures of power, and puts them back into the hands of a multiplicity, to develop and evolve as necessary. The unbound narrative of an inter-textual Palestine thus makes space for challenges and developments to national symbols. The 'text' of the hero can be taken into account, can remain a national signifier developed in the days of *ayām* Beirut, but can later split, so that the hero can also be the post-Oslo hero who seeks a new fight.

The writer

Embedded in the question of the mythical hero is the role of the writer who fashions that myth. Within a tradition where "Arab poets are considered persons of vision and prophecy;"[61] the role of the writer becomes doubly invested in the characters brought forth. Indeed, it is often the writer him or herself who becomes the hero. From the hero-poet of the pre-Islamic qasida, to the messengers of the tales of the Bani Hilal,[62] "the ideal Arab hero has always been embodied in the warrior poet who fought against injustice and oppression."[63] The writer is not, as Salīm so tragically proved, always infallible. In fact, the writer as a device, and as a real 'actor' in the telling of a tale, brings to the surface the problematic nature of narrative as a practise. If the figure of the writer remains an uncritical one, the myth of the hero-writer will give their stories the power to imprison, just as the

nation-state imprisoned Palestine and the hero/fighter its men. The ability to 'see' the frames of narrative and their imprisoning tendencies comes as part and parcel of reading inter-textually.

The multiple components of national narrative and the process by which different texts must be read and evaluated make recognizing the fallibility of the writer part of the reading process. In the same way that a reader is shown how to identify structures of power, and before that to recognize different modes of intertextuality, the case of the writer as a figure asks readers to bring these realizations together, and to understand how it is that conventions of power also dictate conventions of writing. From the use of language to genre, writing too is shown to operate within structures of power. The job of the inter-textual imaginary is to challenge both writer and reader to understand the role of the author and find ways to expose and surpass discernable limitations. This becomes as much an exercise in reading inter-textually as writing. It is perhaps the next stage of Barthes' concept of the 'writerly' work. Not only is the inter-textual novel a work that succeeds in making "the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text"[64] –thus taking on themselves the role of the writer—but the aim of that 'reading' (which is just as much writing), is at once criticism and literature.[65]

To read the figure of the writer inter-textually, writer, form, and narrative must be parsed out as separate entities, each embroiled in their own contexts and conflicts. Recognizing the 'humanity' of the writer and the nature of the text as a human-construction also makes space to 'read in' to the stories the politics of each, and use these external texts in interpreting the story that results. In the framework of the inter-textual nation, and the Palestinian nation in particular where the writer is asked always to be the national writer, the figure of the author is only a hero when the struggle is against the form of the text. Otherwise, metatextual devices are used to bring the figure of the author into the text so as to critique it, and to understand the problematic figure (again subsuming structures and conventions rather than letting them dictate the shape of the novel/nation). Within the Palestine project, the job of the writer becomes to reveal the many ways that the text might surpass its covers and at the same time surpasses both the forms and fiction-writers that work to corrupt it.

Many of the works already examined make ample use of metatextual devices. At once a postmodern/post-colonial device, they are also "customary practices in traditional Arabic culture,"[66] from the frame story of Shaharazad's folk stories to the performance of epic poetry at weddings and celebrations, where "the form of the humble poet conceals not only a master of history and eloquence, but a brave and chivalrous hero."[67] The position of the author within the metatext constantly draws attention to the poet's "distrust of established forms."[68] It was certainly Salwā's intent to draw attention to the problematic form of the text when she threw ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's manuscript from the window, and similarly form was the root of Randa's frustration when she accuses Gaza's newspaper editors of being "children of the dictionary." This is even the critique of tradition in *al-Malhāt* and *Shurfat al-ʻār* through their references to Ibn Manẓur's *Lisān al-ʿarab* and the re-writing of his lexicographical entries. Similarly, Salīm's insistence on writing a monologue and of taking over the character of Yasīn implicates not only the writer himself, but the form of immersive theatre in the death of the aging fighter. The figure of the writer, then, becomes culpable in the limitations and interpretations of the imagined Palestinian nation at the same time as the forms of narrative come under scrutiny.

The first success of the Palestine project, then, is to reveal, as Randa so succinctly put it, that "the poet eats and drinks and watches television, and dreams and plays or gets angry or listens to music or goes to the bathroom" (*A'rās āmina,* 61). If we forget this, if "all that is pushed aside and we don't see anything of the poet but his poetry," Randa warns, the poet is reduced, "as a character becomes a character in novels" (61). To reduce the writer is akin to reducing the hero, and results in a failure to acknowledge the context within which a text is produced, and the structures of power that dictate what television shows are available to watch, what he or she gets angered by, or the political process that the writer is writing against. The writer is not a hero, Randa insists. Proving her point, one of the hated characters of *Zaman*, British officer Edward Peterson, is revealed early on as a poet. He is certainly not a figure who "who fought against injustice and oppression." The officer's poems are included in the novel through footnotes. So where in the body of the work Peterson has threatened the lives of the men of the Galilee village, has shot their livestock, and sworn vengeance against the village heroes, an asterisk adds: "that night, Peterson wrote: No one will ever love you as I do, nether the bullet nor the rose/ No one will ever love you as I do, neither the tiger nor the gazelle…" (324). The ethereal poems, which at

once take away from and shed eerie light on the events of the day, are given the authority of historical texts, and their very concept gives a problematic poetic depth and sensitivity to a reviled soldier. If a man seeking the destruction of Palestine can write such verse, what, then, is the figure of the poet?

Firmly de-linking the heroic from the poetic, and exploring forms of writing and their embedded assumption is *Shurfat rajul al-thalj* (2009), which re-writes and makes complex the figure of the writer, and the function of the text. Written in three parts, which are each divided from the other by separate title pages and 'cover' illustrations, the story of *al-Thalj* emerges in: a linear-plotted psychological novel (152 pages), a semi-autobiography (128 pages), and an afterward (5 pages). The first two are written in a flawlessly realist style, and it is only the use of metatextuality that is able to undercut the authority of the writer in both. It is the relationship between author, character, and text, in the end, that makes the narrative of *al-Thalj* seem entirely unstable. This instability, however, is not apparent until the first text has been finished. The psychological novel contains no clues to suggest that it is simply the first of the three parts. It begins by telling the story of an ambitious but downtrodden newspaperman given the opportunity of a lifetime: the chance to get his name on a front-page story. The psychological novel uses all the tropes of its genre, from time-stamps to a ticking clock, counting down the moments until the execution of a criminal who will make headline news, and following Bahjat Ḥabīb, who has been charged with writing the story.

The first part of *Rajul al-thalj*, the psychological novel, opens with a time stamp at 2:35am when word had come in that the prison sheikh was sick. Without someone to perform last rites for the prisoner Bahjat was writing an article about, the execution–set to run on the front page as Bahjat's first headline story—would be postponed. With the announcement of the man's death already at press, the newspaper officials are in a panic. They call in Bahjat demanding he fix the problem, lest news be wrong. For the reporter, this is also a catastrophe. "Bahjat did not enter the world of journalism reassured of his writing talents" (15) and his whole life he had felt inadequate and invisible. This story was meant to be his breakthrough article, but at the last minute it all seemed to be going wrong. For the middle-aged father, this would not just be a professional frustration. Instead, as the narrator relates, recognition on the front page of the paper was a deep personal desire: "Bahjat dreamed of news, real news, and many times he thought about making it himself" (36). No matter how

hard he worked, however, Bahjat's articles ended up on "some other page" (36), and never on the cover. This, the psychological novel explains, is why Bahjat takes the matter in hand, determined to get his scoop. He races around Amman amid the snowstorm of the century to find a sheikh to go to the prison. After two refuse, saying that if god has willed the condemned man to live another day, than live he must, Bahjat changes tactics. When he approaches the mosque of the third sheikh Bahjat insists that he come: "I'm not asking you to come with me, this is a military matter!!" (140) he yells, pointing to the four-wheel military patrol car with the guard sitting behind the driver's seat. By invoking the power of the state, the newspaperman overrules the power of god that the two earlier religious officials had cited, and takes the unwilling third to the prison.

Here, Bahjat is in the role of the writer. He is not particularly heroic, insightful, or poetic. His instructions for news writing most of the time are to take government press releases and print them, as his boss said: "It's already set, all you need to do is give it a headline" (19). This is also what he has done for the story of the condemned man. Though we never read the story printed in the newspaper, Bahjat's sole focus has been on the fact of the man's execution, the public reaction to the death, and what it means for the state to be carrying out executions. It is only after the man is dead that Bahjat realizes the story has entirely looked over the condemned man himself. Drawing attention to this oversight is a short chapter that appears after the execution, titled, "The condemned man, a close up." The 'close up' contains information that has not factored into Bahjat's story, or his actions leading up the execution: details of the crime for which the condemned man was killed. The writer, and the form of the news article, had both entirely looked over the legal rationale for execution. It was as if the structure of the news article had 'read over' the prisoner, in much the same way that the myth of the hero had 'read over' Fūʿad.

The short profile begins by revealing that the condemned had indeed killed a man, but goes on to explain that the victim had been found raping a prostitute. The condemned man (who remains nameless) killed the rapist as he threw him off of the woman: "The man who was not yet condemned grabbed the old man and lifted him as a leaf of paper with one hand, and with the other hand he hit [the man] with whatever he could find, on his head, killing him" (145). We learn that the "not yet condemned man" had left the country and "stayed away a long time." Then, when he returned:

> The police were waiting for him and had gathered nine unsolved crimes to charge him with… the woman [who he thought he had seen being raped] believed what the judges said [about him being violent], and considered herself lucky to have escaped a link between herself and a man who had committed nine crimes behind her back. (145)

So, the "condemned man" is given a convenient narrative by police (state employees), which is taken up by the court system (state legislators), and repeated in the newspaper (state echo chamber) and at no point in time is any other element of his reality called into the story. It is murder that structures his narrative, any other elements between A, B, and murder are left out, and his fleeing the country only makes it easier for others to construct a narrative in his absence. This process, which the journalist-protagonist is totally complicit in, is the most obviously violent. No less apparent, however, a violent 'writerly' logic that is exercised by the state, by the newspaper, and by Bahjat, each echoing the other and reproducing its frames. So where "the newspaper is merely an 'extreme form' of the book, a book sold on a colossal scale, but of ephemeral popularity,"[69] as Benedict Anderson wrote, the psychological novel and state structure also become complicit in the particular—and violent—imagining of individuals and their relationship to a wider community.

Quite un-heroic, the writer rather enacts violence on the individual. Just as Salīm had in the end killed Yasīn, so too does Bahjat kill the condemned man. He declines an offer to "watch his handiwork," and waits until the execution is completed so he and the sheikh can be driven home. As the condemned man is executed, his reality beyond the news story dawns on Bahjat: he has had a man killed, a man with a life beyond and in addition to his status as the character of "condemned man." It is this man outside of the text, Bahjat realizes, that he has killed in order to feed the news cycle and gain recognition—if not heroism—as a writer. He realizes, "It was my job, all those years, to convince the old and the young that they wanted news of them in the paper, as if those who did not have news about them had no existence" (100). What he realizes he is in the business of, however, is not that of the heroic writer, but that of misrepresentation based on the need for a convenient narrative. It is thus with a deep sense of the failure of Bahjat returns home, at 5:16 AM, handing the newspaper to his wife with the words, "read it":

> Her heart stopped.
> She saw his name in small font under the headline "The government executes a man condemned for murder…" (146)

The passage suggests a reading of the headline: *The government executes a man condemned for murder, by Bahjat Ḥabīb*, implicating Bahjat in the death.

As it turns out, however, Bahjat is not the only writer getting things wrong. Pushing the problem of writing even further, a flip of the page brings part two of *al-Thalj*. Politely addressing the reader is Bahjat Ḥabīb himself, who identifies the author of the preceding novel, saying: "Of course, Mr. ʿAlī, you can imagine the scene in any way you wish, for you are a writer and I am nothing more than a journalist" (158). While seeming to absolve himself of the heroic position of the writer (and placing that onto Mr. ʿAlī), Bahjat at the same time explains in his autobiography how Mr. ʿAlī got a great deal wrong, and boils this down to the fact that the writer had set out to tell the story of an ambitious reporter covering an execution and not the story of Bahjat Ḥabīb. Nothing could be farther from the truth, Bahjat writes, explaining that he really didn't have much interest in the news, and he had spent much of his time at the office flirting with the secretaries; a move that eventually got him in trouble with a minister, whose mistress he had been trying to woo, "enjoying a look at her full and fresh face, and her legendary ass," (239) and who had eventually filed a harassment complaint. Bahjat, it seems, is neither as hardworking a journalist nor as loving a husband as Mr. ʿAlī had made him out to be. These facts, it seems, may have complicated the narrative.

Explaining why he thinks Mr. ʿAlī got everything wrong, Bahjat says that the novelist had taken "on all those bad habits of books that try to novelize the story of your life" (163). Books, Bahjat tells Mr. ʿAlī, "prolong, go into side issues and turn around searching, then remember until they reach the end, which was [really just] something small and clear that you wanted to explain" (163). A simple story—with the premise of a mistreated journalist—is thus woven into a long story. The resulting narrative, however, instead of following Bahjat's life, follows the trajectory set out by the simple premise. In following one story and not the other, the details of Bahjat's life are either forced into the framework of the dominant story, or they are left out completely. The only difference between a newspaper and a novel, he says later, is the "literary language" the latter uses (162). It is this "literary language" that means "If I [Bahjat] had read what he wrote about me in the first version without my name being there, I wouldn't have recognized myself in the words" (178). He takes particular issue with the description of him as looking like "the actor Andy

Garcia, who I don't know" (178). Bahjat's perception of himself is clearly different from how Mr. ʿAlī has portrayed him in the novel-text. Besides, Bahjat adds, while "at the very least, I am handsome" he dislikes the emphasis text one put on his good looks, saying that beauty "dries up and fades away, leaving behind those small grooves on the sides of my face that can best be described as looking like the lines on a [dried] date" (178). He asks Mr. ʿAlī to promise to remove the descriptions, since beauty is not something he associates with his own personality, but rather something that Mr. ʿAlī has used as a device to explain Bahjat's personality. How can this be the story of Bahjat, he asks, if Bahjat does not recognize himself in it?

With Bahjat writing back, the story is no longer finished with the close of the psychological novel. At once, the events of Bahjat's life in Mr. ʿAlī's version are taken out and imagined into the frame of the autobiography, and vice versa. The information presented in the autobiography begins to make the narrative conclusions of the psychological novel impossible. Where Mr. ʿAlī had figured Umm Bahjat as a kindly but slightly silly woman responsible for Bahjat's desire for belonging, in the autobiography Bahjat suggests that his mother had been killed, possibly by their neighbour, so that she would not reveal to him who his father was (237-8). This also directly contradicts the psychological profile Mr. ʿAlī put together, which suggested that even Umm Bahjat did not know who the father of her son was. The criticisms made of the novel are equally applicable to both Mr. ʿAlī, and to Bahjat as a newspaper writer. In assessing and responding to the novel-text, Bahjat offers a critique of narrative structure. It is, as Robin Ostle has observed, an example whereby the autobiography "becomes an instrument of strategy through which a position of relative powerlessness or marginality is transformed into something which is able to challenge or occupy the centre."[70] At the same time, however, the autobiography is subject to its own norms and formulas, and is itself constrained by both the politics of form, and the sentiment of its writer—Bahjat—as he seeks to refute that "centre" which it seeks to displace.

The structure of the text and the figure of the writer are thus dissociated, but both come under scrutiny. Just as the figure of the poet hero is shown to be problematic—with writers pursuing their goals for reasons all and sundry and quite often to do with harnessing the power that comes with the respected position—so too is the poetry that they produce. Not quite an artistic expression free of form or politics, writing is in fact the opposite. As the

footnoted stanzas of Peterson in *Zaman* revealed a poetic flare for descriptions of colonial sentiment and superiority, the sentiment of the newspaper, and later the novel, are also shown to be capable of representing violence or in exacting violence through their representations. This becomes apparent through the dissociation made possible through metatextuality, which is the same mechanism that expands the texts beyond their own covers. If the 'truth' of Bahjat is somewhere beyond his representation of himself and the representation of him by Mr. ʿAlī, than it is the imaginative space between the two representations that allow a reader to access a sort of truth, or at the very least create the possibility of that imaginative space.

In the final part of *al-Thalj*, the idea of the problematic text is pushed even further, and a solution to the limitations of both author and text proposed. Its title, presented on a separate cover page along with a picture of fluttering crows, is titled "What remains hidden" (281). The part has only one chapter, whose title is given as: "… … …" and it consists of three pages, split into twelve variously sized paragraphs, each only made up of successive ellipses [Figure 10].

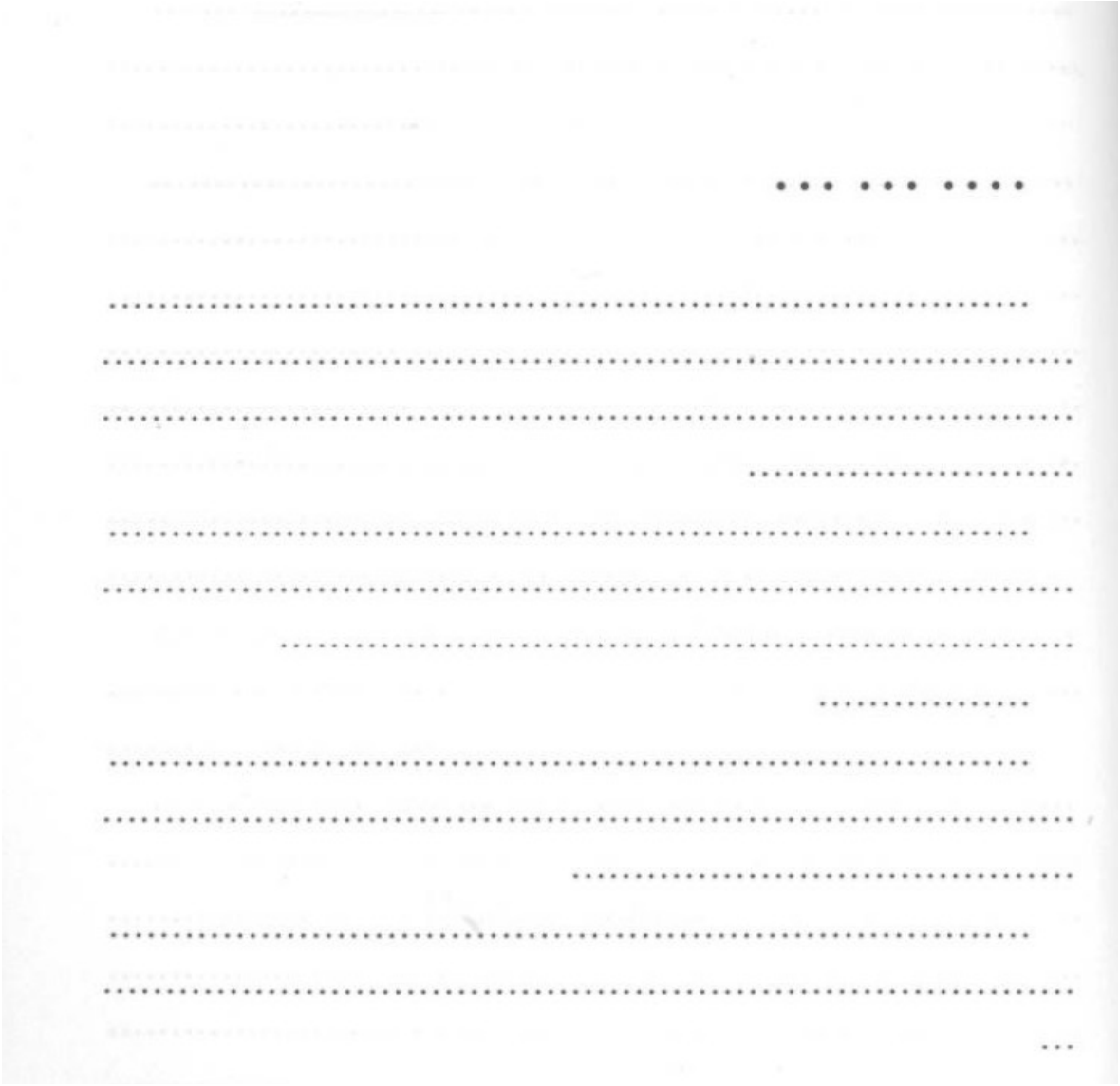

Figure 12: Ellipses in *al-Thalj*

The only way to escape the politics of the writer, and the politics of the text, it suggests, is to realize the impossibility of representation; that truth remains hidden. To read the texts is to read and understand the politics of symbols, the violence of form. Just as the hero had to be multiplied to include corrupt heroes, and the fighter to include a man holding a bouquet, so too did the text have to be complicated, and a framework put in place for a more complex understanding of just what that produced by the writer can be. In making each of these differences visible, and in providing alternatives to violent forms that must be included in the national imaginary, the works of the Palestine project re-conceptualize not only the idea of the nation, but its parts as well.

[1] Faiṣal Darrāj, comments on fourth cover of Ibrāhīm Naṣrallāh, *Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ*. Beirut*:* al-Muʾassasat al-ʿArabīya lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 2002.
[2] Khalili and Humphries, "Gender of Nakba Memory," 209.
[3] Laurie Blome Jacobsen [ed.], *Finding Means, UNRWA's Financial Crisis and Refugee Living Conditions: Socio-economic Situation of Palestinian Refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank and Gaza Strip*, Fafo-report 427, vol. I, Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, Oslo, 2003.
[4] Rashid Khalidi, "The 'disappearance' of Palestinian identity," *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.
[5] Ted Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant As National Signifier," in *Politics of the Modern Arab World: Critical Issues in Modern Politics*. 3, 2009: 51-72.
[6] Julie Peteet, *Gender in Crisis: Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, 209.
[7] Ghassān Kanafānī, *Umm Saʿd: Riwāyah*. Beirut: al- Muʾassasat al-Abḥāth al-ʿArabīya, 1985.
[8] Kanafānī, *Umm Saʿd*, 15.
[9] Kanafānī, "Introduction" in *Umm Saʿd*.
[10] Radwa ʿAshur, *al-Tariq ʾila al-khayma al-ukhra: dirasa fi aʿmal Ghassān Kanafānī*. Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 1977, 130-1 (As cited in Nancy Coffin, "Engendering Resistance in the Work of Ghassan Kanafani: All That's Left to You, of Men and Guns, and Umm Saʿd," in *The Arab Studies Journal*. 4.2, 1996, 98-118).
[11] *BBC*, "Confusion over Palestinian's death," http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1197889.stm [9 September, 2014, published Friday, 2 March, 2001, 11:58 GMT]
[12] Laleh Khalili and Isabelle Humphries, "Gender of Nakba Memory," in *Nakba*, 208.
[13] Coffin, "Engendering Resistance," 104.
[14] Kanafānī, as quoted in Coffin, Nancy. "Engendering Resistance in the Work of Ghassan Kanafani: All That's Left to You, of Men and Guns, and Umm Saʿd." *The Arab Studies Journal*. 4.2, 1996, 104.
[15] Kanafānī, as quoted in Coffin, "Engendering Resistance," 104.
[16] Ouyang, *Nostalgia*, 81.
[17] Rasheed El-Enany, "The Madness of Non-Conformity: Woman Versus Society in the Fiction of Salwā Bakr" in *Journal of Arabic Literature*. 37.3, 2006, 381.
[18] Ouyang, *Nostalgia*, 83.
[19] El-Enany, "Madness of Non-Conformity," 381.
[20] Thanks to Natalie Abu Shakra for her help digging up information on this song. See also a brief biography of Qandil at http://www.masress.com/shbabmisr/17122.
[21] David McDonald, *My Voice Is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013, 93-4.
[22] Ouyang, *Nostalgia*, 81.
[23] Muhsin Jassim Al-Musawi, *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence*. Leiden: Brill, 2003, 322.
[24] Ouyang, *Nostalgia*, 80.
[25] Carolyn Lesjak, "From Wollstonecraft to Gissing: the revolutionary emergence of women, children, and labor in novelistic narrative" in Caserio, Robert L, and Clement Hawes [Eds.]. *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 309.
[26] Charles M Tatum, "The Child Point of View in Donoso's Fiction." *Journal of Spanish Studies: Twentieth Century*. 1.3, 1973, 187.
[27] Dalia S. Mostafa, "Son'allah Ibrahim's Al-Talassus: the Politics of Modernity in Egypt Through the Child-Narrator's Lens," in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. 47.4, 2011, 426.
[28] Carolyn Lesjak, "From Wollstonecraft to Gissing: the revolutionary emergence of women, children, and labor in novelistic narrative," in *The Cambridge History of the English Novel*, Robert L Caserio and Clement Hawes [Eds]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 321.

[29] Lesjak, "From Wollstonecraft to Gissing," 309.
[30] Lesjak, "From Wollstonecraft to Gissing," 319.
[31] Darrāj, comments on fourth cover of *Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ*, 2002.
[32] Mostafa, "Son'allah Ibrahim's Al-Talassus," 416.
[33] Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Gaza: A History*. [Trans. John King]. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, 5-12.
[34] According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, during the 21-days of violence, 1,440 people were killed and 5,380 injured. This statistic was cited as collected from the Palestinian Ministry of Health (see OCHA Humanitarian Monitor, occupied Palestinian Territory, Number 33, January 2009).
[35] Aghacy, *Masculine Identity,* 5.
[36] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 93.
[37] Peteet, *Gender in Crisis*, 172.
[38] Rosemary Sayigh and Noam Chomsky, *The Palestinians*. London: Zed Books, 2007, 136.
[39] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 91.
[40] Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate," in *Journal of Palestine Studies,* 13(3), 29.
[41] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 93.
[42] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 216.
[43] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 216.
[44]Samar Kanafani, "Leaving Mother-Land: the anti-feminine in fidaʾi narratives," in *Middle Eastern Belongings*, Dinae King [Ed]. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013, viii.
[45] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 216.
[46] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 149.
[47] This title in particular comes from the eponymous story in C.G. Campbell's *Tales from the Arab Tribes*. New York: Arno Press, 1980, 110-25. The linkage of facial hair and masculinity of course has been traced more broadly in Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005; and is mentioned as well in Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Naguib Mahfouz also uses the mustache, describing protagonist Al-Sayyid Ahmad Abd al-Jawad as a "man" with a "handsome, powerful body" topped with a "thick black moustache […] twisted with extraordinary care" (Naguib Mahfouz, *Palace Walk*. New York: Doubleday, 1990, 12), or the character Fahmy, who "made a handsome appearance. With his large body, sprouting moustache and mature masculinity, he seemed much older than he was," (62).
[48]John B Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948, 225.
[49] Mary C Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain, and the Making of Jordan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 168-170.
[50] Ghassān Kanafānī, *'An al-rijāl wa al-banādiq*. Beirut: Dār al-Udabā', 1968.
[51] Barbara Harlow, "Introduction," in *Palestine's Children: Short Stories by Ghassan Kanafani*. Ghassān Kanafānī, [Trans. Barbara Harlow]. London: Heinemann, 1984, 4.
[52] Kanafani, "The child who borrowed his uncle's gun and went east to Safad," in *Palestine's Children*.
[53] Kanafānī, *'An al-rijal*, 1.
[54] Compounding the differences between characters, as Harlow writes in her introduction, Kanafānī's stories not only constructed the hero, but through tracing the hero's movements, "provide not only a historical account of Palestine, but a topographical record as well" (182). Fūʿad, on the other hand, is totally unable to read the landscape, and is in fact lost most of the time. Any topographical map from the young soldier's story would be as misleading as the rhetoric of the ALA.
[55] Note that all references to the novel are to the translation *Time of White Horses,* by Nancy Roberts. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012, 182.
[56] While Karim Mattar has examined *Zaman* as an alternative writing of history, calling the work the result of Naṣrallāh's resolution to "inscribe their story, their voice, into the narrative of world

history by appropriating the European genre of historical fiction and re-inflecting it from the Palestinian perspective," he also observed that the epic frame—in particular "due to his mythic register"—works to stifle and reduce complex ideas (in particular for Mattar's observation, on the issue of representations of women and gender, but also as we see in the idea of the hero). Mattar notes tangentially that this "thereby reproduces and naturalizes such practice through form," (184) and I would extend this significantly, to reveal the very limitations of the epic-mythic form in telling the Palestinian experience without reproducing the problems of the genre. See Karim Mattar, "Out of Time: Colonial History in Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Time of White Horses*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. 50.2, 2014.

[57]From the "Group of Twenty" petition, 1999, as quoted in Nigel C. Parsons, *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority*. New York: Routledge, 2005, 161.

[58] See, for example: Islah Jad, "The Post-Oslo Palestine and Gendering Palestinian Citizenship," in *Ethnicities* 11.3, 2011: 360-372; and also Anne Le More, *International Assistance to the Palestinians After Oslo*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2008, 100.

[59] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 216.

[60] Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs,* 189.

[61] Bassam Frangieh, "Modern Arabic Poetry: Vision and Reality," in *Mahmoud Darwish, Exile's Poet: Critical Essays* [Nassar, Hala K, and Najat Rahman Eds]. Northampton, Mass: Olive Branch Press, 2008, 12.

[62] Dwight F Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1995, 72-3.

[63] Frangieh, "Modern Arabic Poetry," 12.

[64] Barthes, Roland, Richard Miller, Richard Howard, and Honoré de Balzac. *S/Z*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974, 4.

[65] Barthes, *S/Z*, 4.

[66] Al-Musawi, *Postcolonial Arabic Novel*, 338.

[67] Reynolds, *Heroic Poets,* 73.

[68] Al-Musawi, *Postcolonial Arabic Novel*, 338.

[69] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 34.

[70] Robin Ostle, "Introduction," *Writing the Self: Autobiographical Writing in Modern Arabic Literature*, Robin Ostle, Ed. Moor, and Stefan Wild [Eds] London: Saqi Books, 1998, 22.

Part IV—Palestinian Constellation

The inter-textual nation upends almost completely the foundations of the nation-state as the paradigm of imagined community. It takes the practical realities of a national people and finds innovative ways of thinking the relationships between individuals, events, locations, symbols, and structures of power. These relationships use the vocabulary of literature to re-route the foundational principles of the nation, which no longer has as its antecedent the principles of bounded space and linear time. If inter-textuality gives a literary vocabulary through which to think the kinds of relationships between each of the elements of the nation being plotted in the works of the Palestine project, there remains the question of a model within which to situate simultaneously a distinct yet open-ended set of inter-referential texts, each related but each a 'whole' unto itself. The chapters to follow will look at examples of the different ways that inter-textuality links (at the same time as it deconstructs, as in Chapter 3) discontiguous and dis-temporal spaces (Chapter 7), discrete yet connected communities within and between these spaces (Chapter 8), and at the same time sets out a paradigm wherein national texts are a defined and discrete collection, but a collection that is open-ended and flexible (Chapter 9). In discussing and describing these literary techniques, the aim is also to show how they fit into one conceptual model: the constellation.

This model of the inter-textual nation takes Walter Benjamin's 'constellation of the idea' as a starting place. The German philosopher and critic wrote about the "constellation of the idea" in a number of works authored between the late 1920s and 1940, but never fully worked through or completed the notion as a model. Instead, it has been used and developed by generations of Benjamin scholars who have developed the constellation as a frame within which to piece together and understand the networks of ideas that Benjamin himself thought out.[1] The constellation as a model for understanding emerged as the thinker wrote on *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*,[2] and worked through the very concept of a beginning. Benjamin found no real 'origin' for tragic drama as a genre (an idea), and instead began exploring the idea as a phenomenon (or phenomena as ideas, as his terminology is at once frustratingly and fantastically fluid).[3] Ideas, he concluded, "are not represented in themselves, but solely and exclusively in an arrangement of concrete

elements in the concept."[4] In other words, an idea is not a tangible 'thing,' something that can be traced through linear development, or fixed to a particular location. Instead, he suggested, the idea is an arrangement, a particular set of that which is identifiable understood in relationship; a constellation.[5] Thus, in Benjamin's terms, a constellation is a series of related and interlinked locatable events that may individually exist in a time and a place, but that which as a collective can be said to have generated an idea.[6] This is precisely what can be said about the works of the Palestine project, and the imagination of the inter-textual nation that it embodies.

In map of Palestine as a complex nation that exists over multiple locations and across multiple trajectories, each work/star is whole and unique (the 'work' in Barthes terms),[7] and each Palestinian experience its own. Understood as part of a constellation, however, a wider meaning is produced through relationship. This collective of stars is Kristeva's 'literary utterance,' and a way of 'mapping' a nation liberated from the norms of the Wesphalian national form. Within the constellation, multiple and complex associations between individuals, structures, locations, time-spaces, and ways of imagining can be made, re-made, and extended. The constellation, moreover, is open, flexible, and can make room for additional 'stars' or texts when they appear. So, the experience of a young woman in Gaza during the Second Intifada would form one point in the constellation, as would the representation of Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip during the post-Oslo period. So too would the Nakba form a point, as well as each of the major and minor trajectories of exile that Palestinian refugees traversed.

Imagining Palestine, its locations and its structures as a constellation, allows for a de-territorialisation without discounting the importance of sovereignty, or lives lived cut off from certain lands and landscapes. At the same time, sovereignty remains as an important political text, and as a structure that very much shaped the past and the presents of Palestinian life. It also allows for a non-linear history, so that Anderson's 'homogeneous empty time' can fill up the worlds inhabited in each text, each star. These many different time-spaces can, then, intertwine and intersect in networks that mirror, simultaneously, the spiral narrative of *Ṭuyūr*, and the complex embeddings of *Zaytūn*. As Graeme Gilloch writes about Benjamin's ideas, within a constellation ideas "must be imagined as superimposed, one upon the other, so that now this one, now the other, takes precedence

and appears closest to us."[8] As it is with understanding the development of an idea (which, indeed, is what the imagined national community is after all): "The notion of the constellation captures both the potential deceptiveness of any scheme—points which seem nearest to one another may prove to be those furthest apart—and their contingency. Each constellation must be recognized as only one permutation among an infinite number of possible configurations, conjunctions and correspondences."[9] These spaces, times, and symbols of the nation become open to near infinite relationship.

Imagining the transformation of thinking from the bounded nation-state to the inter-textual nation [Figure 13] begins with acknowledging the correspondences between the structure of thinking that allowed the European nation to take shape, and that same structure in developing the novel as a genre. Taking into account the assumptions about space and time that drove this imagining, the form of the nation—just like the form of the novel—was taken on (or in the case of the former, "transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness" as Anderson understates it)[10] and transformed in imaginative practice. The realities of the Palestinian nation necessitated an alternative paradigm within which to think relationships between space, time, and individuals. As a collective, the elements of the constellation can be seen to re-present the elements of the national community imagined within the mode of the nation state. The inter-textual nation as constellation posits the imagined national community as not only the sum of the parts of the constellation, but also as an imaginary that can be summoned within each of its individual points. The nation is at once manifest within each text—as amalgams of the systems and structures that have shaped Palestinian experience—nuanced within the networked relationships between myriad other texts, which are also the nation.

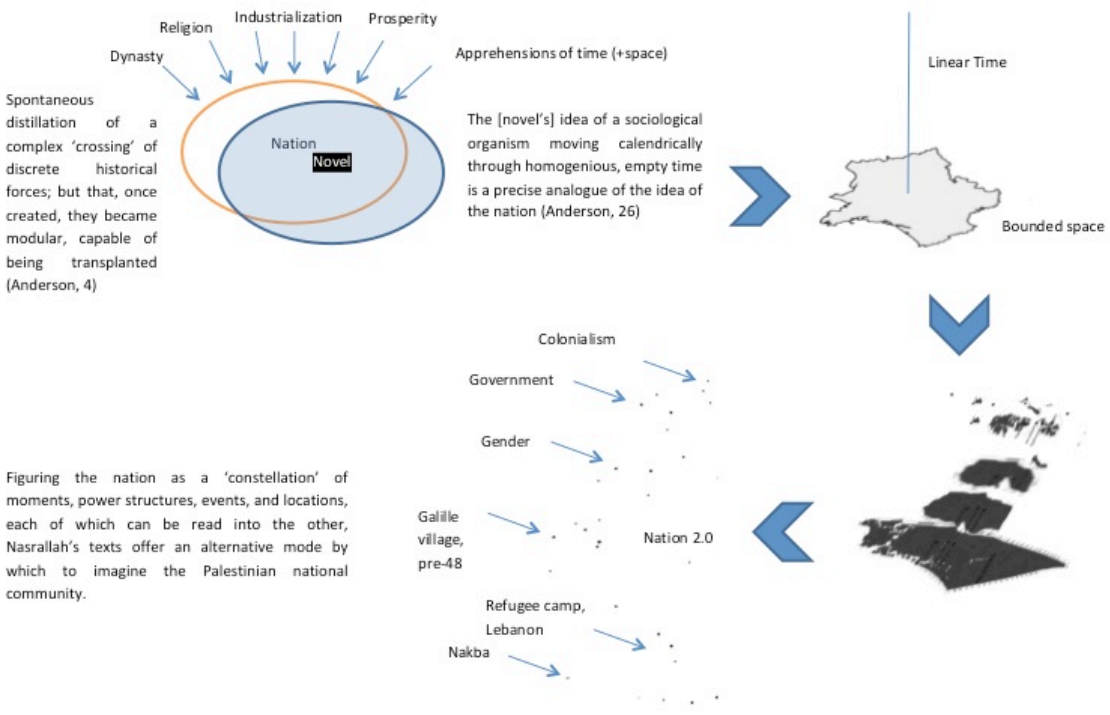

Figure 13: From bounded nation to constellation

Thinking the texts of Palestine in terms of a constellation at once breaks away from the linear and bounded nation that has hitherto been the assumed–or at least the undergirding structural form—of the imagined national community, and opens up countless new possibilities for imagining the relationship between space, time, individuals and collectives in national terms. It also allows a nuanced view of the operation of power, how, as Samira Aghacy puts it, the "difference in the manner and manifestation of the subjugation and suffering" can be quantified. For example, she goes on, in situations where power operates unevenly, and "whereby men are dominant in one context but subordinate and powerless in other contexts, to father family and government."[11] Thus, the structure/text of patriarchy within the constellation (or the figure of the hero, or the mother) can be understood to be differentially operable depending on its own workings as well as on the other texts it encounters. This nuance penetrates not just issues of gender, but also the differential and complex workings of power. This power, manifest in state structures, in notions of sovereignty, in national symbols, and in gender or family structures, is something that is intertwined with "cultural interventions" which exist in "ideological contestations" that operate within and "over the image of the nation."[12]

The inter-textual nation is to be understood on the one hand as a national version of Kristeva's 'literary utterance'—an invisible repository from which all works draw and too which all works add, only to be drawn on for later works—and, on the other, as the gravity holding together and making relational a collection of individual 'whole' representations of Palestine. The following sections will look at these two parallel attributes of the inter-textual nation, with readings from Naṣrallāh's Palestine project to outline step-by-step the way that the constellation (the 'national' literary utterance) is imagined in literary terms as a form within which to read the inter-textual nation.

Chapter 7 – Space without territory

What exactly does it mean—in spatial terms—to imagine a nation as a constellation? How does inter-textuality link one located Palestinian experience to another, and by what means is a new geography for the nation created that can imagine inter-textual space for a people? Three devices used to extend and expand thinking about space in the Palestine project 'produce space' (to use Henri Lefebvre's terminology) in a new way. Since space, as Lefebvre argues, is "indistinguishable from knowledge,"[13] this new "use of knowledge"[14] to create space differently is in many ways remarkable. Where Lefebvre once lamented that "only bulldozers and Molotov cocktails can change the dominant organization of space, that destruction must come before reconstruction,"[15] Palestine has already and continues to endure the bulldozers and Molotovs of change, and has re-produced its national space accordingly. Readers, then, are "called upon to project a kind of spatial mental image as they put … pieces together,"[16] and through this can think not only space differently, but, perhaps, can *think* differently as well. From the very concept of a series that links discrete works into a wider imaginary, to the innovative use of textual structures—the epilogue, the afterword, the author's note, the series title, etc.—the artifice of the novel and its conventions are used to expand how the space of nation can be understood. This alternative spatiality sets the foundation of how the parts of the constellation inter-relate.

Nakba and geography

The first lesson in reading space inter-textually—and not in terms of sovereignty or territory—comes in *Ṭifl,* whose protagonist Fūʿad shows how it is possible to imagine the action and interaction of numerous structures of power over a single geography. The novel, in essence, tells the story of the Nakba, and through this offers an alternative way to think space. That this is done through one of the foundational moments of modern Palestinian history –the Nakba—reinforces the constellation as a foundational principal of the national imaginary. *Ṭifl* tells the Nakba as a process and series of complex interactions of diverse texts over spaces that do not need to be imagined contiguously. This mechanism of imagining offers an alternative to one that sees any single event as happening over the space of the nation (as in homogeneous empty time), and instead shows how diverse events that happen across multiple spaces can all be imagined within a constellation, which gives shape to the Nakba not as an even in time, but rather as a constellated phenomenon. The story is not told over national space, but rather inter-textually, giving the now-characteristic treatment of structures, events, locations, and individuals equal and critical place within a narrative.

First, the novel works to de-territorialize—in the bounded terms of 'sovereignty'—the narrative of catastrophe, liberating events and structures of power from any single geography. Set in 1930-48 mostly in what was then Transjordan but also in British Mandate Palestine, *Ṭifl* claims the political and social forces acting on the whole area—which it parses out in its look at the different structures of power that operate (see Chapter 3)— as both Palestinian and national. It shows how structures of power influencing Jordan at that time were major—indeed pivotal—factors in the unfolding (and understanding) of the Nakba. In its telling, *Ṭifl* constructs jarringly (and in the end tragically) separate texts and structures. In the end, it shows not only that the story of the Nakba the sum of all of these parts, but that its tragedy emerged—was a result of—the relationships between each text and the other. The distance between ALA rhetoric and events on the ground, of international efforts and the help that would have been needed to change the course of events, are all part of the story of the Nakba as well as its precipitators. This way of telling offers a paradigm understanding the significance of the imagined 'distance' between texts of the constellation.

The most powerful example of this comes in the form of news broadcasts that Fūʿad listens to as he seeks a (traditional and linear) frame within which to understand what is going on. Separated from his unit following the first (lost) battle for Palestine, Fūʿad wanders the outskirts of Jerusalem trying to find his commanders, and tunes into different radio broadcasts to try and glean information about where they may have retreated to. However, all the announcers relate is news of victory. The broadcasts enter the novel directly; they are not narrated through Fūʿad, but rather come via the distinct voice of the broadcaster, or the words of a song appear in the novel as though heard by the reader. Fūʿad believes the news broadcasts despite their unbelievable information, and the fact that it contradicts his own experience. At first, this does not bother Fūʿad, as the narrator comments, "the only thing that surprised you was that all these things had happened in your absence and with such swiftness" (228). The soldier reads one 'text' (the broadcasts of victory) over what he imagines as the space of Palestine. Neither Fūʿad's limited view or the false broadcast can be said to represent any sort of 'truth' about the situation; instead, the 'truth' is precisely the failure of the first text to understand the second.

The hapless soldier acts as the perfect character to reflect the distinct and distinguishing gaps between one text and another. With no news on his unit and their defeat after several days, Fūʿad begins to note the disparity between news and life. Within the glow of victory that the radio announced, however, Fūʿad goes on to daydream about how the Sayīd Al-bilād will honour him with sweet words and medals upon his return, as part of the victory army (though the narrator reminds him "but the truth is, you hadn't done anything until now" (237)). It seems that nothing can shake Fūʿad's belief in the ALA rhetoric, even though he has had no part in the victories, and even—tragically—when he sees first-hand the mass violence being perpetrated by Zionist forces that the ALA had not been able to prevent. Lost in a wooded forest, Fūʿad follows a stray goat to a nearby village, but on entry finds only corpses. Fūʿad is the "first to enter Deir Yasin after the massacre" (255).[17] He spends two days digging a mass grave for the dead. As one of the landmark events of the Nakba, the massacre at Deir Yasin would prompt many Palestinians to seek safety from what were from that point understood to be vicious and advancing Zionist forces.[18]

This telling of the multiple 'texts' of the Nakba forces a reading of the seminal national event in complex and non-linear terms. Moreover, it tells of the event as tied specifically to

locations but as ultimately a larger idea. The novel in fact insists on the separation of events in a location from the idea of a whole and territorialized story of the Nakba, effecting as it did individuals and spaces that stretch well beyond any map of historical Palestine. The failure of the ALA to prevent such atrocities illustrates just how separate their 'text' was, and to the wide gulf between the medals of which Fūʿad dreamed, and any reality on the ground. As he leaves the village, Fūʿad tunes into the Cairo broadcast, but the station once again "didn't carry anything but good news" (238), with announcements of constant victory sandwiched between "songs of joy" (239) that no longer lifted his spirits.

The novel is able to express the complexity of the Nakba through its integration into the story of an ever-increasing number of inter-texts representing many and divers actors (texts) at play. When Fūʿad sees an airplane fly overhead, he immediately assumes it is an enemy craft on its way to "strike the capital [Amman]" and worries for the safety of the Sayīd al-bilād. It is a UN flight, however, in a tailspin after being shot down by Zionist forces "even though the UN flag was clearly visible" (244). Hitting a tree, two peacekeepers emerge, one dead and the other shortly identified as John William, a Norwegian, it is William's testimony—as a narrative of events from a different point of view—that finally makes it impossible for Fūʿad to continue reading the Nakba as a sure ALA victory; or, as a story that can be told through a single existing frame. It is not an easy process, however. Fūʿad's "surety was shaken with the falling of William's aircraft, if only because it meant they [Zionist militias] had forces able to fall a plane" (248), however, he remains stubbornly loyal to the powerful idea of Arab victory. Insisting to himself that both he and William will find their way back to their units, Fūʿad assumes leadership of the duo "for no reason other than that the gun was in your hand" (258), still relying on symbols that prove to be increasingly meaningless.

Hoping the radio would give him some information to help reconcile his new knowledge of formidable Zionist weaponry with his idea of immanent Arab victory, Fūʿad: "searched for a single news broadcast that was able to say the truth to the world" (253). But he found none, even to this late point in the lost battle; he had only heard reports of the "victory of the allied Arabs in their battle that they had tackled courageously until now" (258). The contradiction between the newscasts and the realities of Deir Yasin and the fallen aircraft is set out by the narrator, who wryly comments, "the news doesn't lie, despite the fact that

you saw what you saw" (267). It is at this point, with constant contradictions between what he hears and sees, that Fūʿad's questioning of events becomes more and more frequent and doubt sets in. He starts wondering whom he can trust, begins to question his faith, first in William, then in the news broadcasts, then in the ALA. None of them offer the truth, and this is precisely the point.

Speaking to Fūʿad about his work for the UN and of being gunned down by Zionist troops, William says: "I think this military doesn't want anyone here; Not you, and not the families of the country, and not us either, especially us, because they don't want us to witness" (244). It is William who tells Fūʿad that the village he came across was the site of what would become an infamous slaughter in the Palestinian Nakba. With the help of the Norwegian peacekeeper, Fūʿad is forced to cue into the problems of power posturing and rhetoric that he hears on the radio. With news from the Norwegian, and no news of a plane being shot down by Zionist armies, Fūʿad is finally disillusioned enough to see the truth of defeat and the gap between what he sees, and what he is told. Fūʿad experiences what seems a psychological break. He decides to return to "the capital," and *en route* comes across his reflection in that old Roman-era well; a reflection he no longer recognizes. Unable to see himself in himself, there is, Fūʿad feels, nothing left to hold on to, no stable structure within which he can interpret the world.

His faith in the power structures that brought him into the army, and on which his own self-identity had been structured, is so broken that he no longer knows how to interpret his own reflection. He also has no structure of interpretation within which to 'read' what he sees. How, for example, is he to read his impressive moustache, his good looks, when these only take on meaning within the structures that he had been raised within. His sense of alienation between selves (the one he searched for in the well and the one he found) is compounded when Fūʿad returns to Amman and is greeted by a cheering crowd (271). Confused, Fūʿad prepares an apology for having failed to bring the rifle back "victorious" and for losing Palestine (retaining only the West Bank and Gaza). The Sayīd al-bilād, however, welcomes Fūʿad home a hero, proclaiming: "If it weren't for you, we would have lost the rest of Palestine!" (272). Fūʿad is totally unable to reconcile the sustained rhetoric of power–which is unable to absorb the defeat–with his own experience. He remains broken, and continues for the rest of his life trying to search for his old self within the new: the victory in the

defeat. He goes out to buy a mirror, puts it in his barracks and looks inside it day after day, trying to find that which had been "erased;" trying to reconcile 'truth' with narrative, but finding no available narrative frame that might allow it. His psychological break ensures that, even though he is back within a single structure and could perhaps revert to his earlier worldview; the many competing and overlapping 'texts' uncovered during his ordeal remain texts that must be accounted for.

It is in the call for a way to integrate these texts that the constellation becomes the best possible answer; a way to hold each of the texts in discourse, without attributing more or less legitimacy to any single narrative. Nor does the constellation seek a start or finishing point, or limit events within its sphere to contiguous geography. Thus, rhetoric from Cairo, orders from Amman, structures set out in London, attacks from Zionist militias, and the destruction these wrought on Palestinians can be read inter-textually, and each of the links held together in the constellation. For Palestine, the imagined 'space' of the nation is thus expanded to include the British Mandate system, the Arab League, and Zionism, as well as the locations from which these ideologies emanated, and the wider structures that they are understood to be part of. Palestinian geography is, then, connected to the colonial, the post-colonial, and the development of nationalism within the Middle East. This multiple and relational thinking expands the imaginative space of the nation. Rather than a 'break' that dissociates a past worldview from the present realities, a constellation holding these diverse inter-texts rather gives a framework within which to understand how the multiple and complex structures of the past, of other locations, each participated in the realities of the present.

Thinking in series

Where intertexts at times work to fragment and draw attention to the multiplicity of systems and structures that must exist within an inter-textual nation, devices also work to strengthen the concept of a 'whole' or cohesive collection. There is perhaps no better example of this than the device of the series. The relationship between books that are linked within a series is a device that has been much theorized. Genette wrote in his *Palimpsests*, for example:

> The *sequel*, as we have seen, differs from a continuation in that it continues a work not in order to bring it to a close, but, on the contrary, in order to take it beyond what was initially considered to be its ending.[19]

A sequel, or the works of a series, do not just extend or expand any one novel. Instead, the novels collectively contribute to the construction of a world that surpasses each individual text. This process of association, and of expanding the idea of the text beyond any one set of bounded covers, is at work in both *al-Malhāt* and the *Shurafāt*, as well as in the Palestine project as a wider endeavour. Indeed, it is the device of the series as it is used in *al-Malhāt* and the *Shurafāt* that cues a reader into the device as a foundational concept for the Palestinian nation. For the Palestine project, the device of the series works imaginatively to link the locations of the novels that make up the endeavour, and to create a space for Palestine that is wider than its parts.

Perhaps the most pertinent example of this technique in action is in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which imagined together the Christian celestial realms for the first time in the 13th century. Through his *Inferno*, *Purgatory*, and *Paradise*, the structure of a celestial universe was imagined [Figure 14].

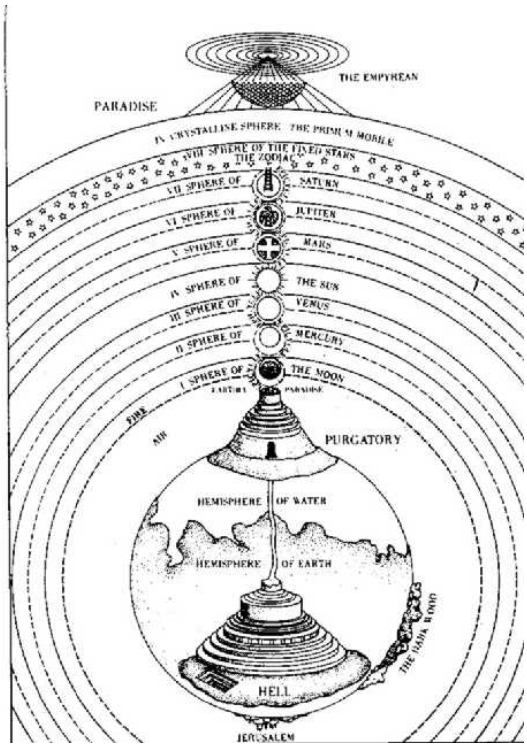

Figure 14: Linking worlds through inter-texts (Dante's *Divine Comedy*)[20]

While each of Dante's volumes imagined a discrete location, in uniting them through a series, a divine geography was made. As Genette observes, without the first text in a series, the second "would not have the same meaning, or the same resonance."[21] Without the device of the series, each celestial or under-worldly location would have remained discrete; the afterlife a bunch of fragments. Without a framework for connection, there is no celestial universe. This is the same case for the worlds of the Palestine project. As one of the characters in *Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ* (olives in the streets) puts it, "Oh Salwā, outside of our homeland we are nothing but olives of the streets" (126); outside of *al-Malhāt* and the *Shurafāt*, or indeed the thinking that generated the Palestine project, her story is less connected to the nation-constellation, and instead it would be read as a fragment.

Without as framework within which to read Palestinian experience within a wider national sphere, existence becomes self-exhausting, rootless, without meaning; like "olives in the street." As a national symbol of fruit produced through ancient roots, of a past, and of a connection to the earth, the only way olives can retain their meaning is by being invested in as national and 'read' as such. The olives are thus linked, as though in a series, by one imagined and national tree. Imagined, because, Palestinian "identities are not affixed to singular places but are embedded in trajectories of exile which have a point of origin in Palestine."[22] The imagined tree provides the point of origin, and its dispersed olives can be integrated despite Palestine's "disordered experience of geography and space and time."[23]

The idea is that fragmentation is unproductive; that life as a refugee without a nation to be a part of remains unspeakable and un-narratable. Where the title of the novel— *Zaytūn al-shawāriʿ* [Olives in the streets]—refers back to the problem of representing fragments, the series becomes the solution. It is Salwā herself that clues readers into the significance of a series in creating the meaning beyond any one text. While staying with her schoolteacher in order to escape the abuse of her uncle and the camp official, Salwā marvels at the woman's bookshelves:

> There were more books than in the school library, more books than I had seen in my life, numbered series of books: the novels of the Hilāl publishers, Hilāl 's critical editions, world literature, international plays … and between them the most surprising, *Don Quixote*, which I had never imagined was in two volumes! [Then] there were two I did not understand, and I put my hands out toward them: *Hell, Purgatory*… (63)

In her perusal of the library, Salwā admires specifically the *collections* of texts. Not a single edition that she notes is a self-contained work that ends at its own cover. Each has a relationship to the others on the shelf either by virtue of their author's construction, or that of their editors. This is true for the idea of 'critical editions' as well as the concept of World Literature and the Hilāl series. An Egyptian literary magazine, *al-Hilāl,* founded by Jurjī Zaydān, which had released in series—since 1882—what would become the most notable literary publications in Arabic. Its publishing house, Dar al-Hilāl, also put out significant translations, and re-published a "classics" series of numerous works of Arabic literature, history, and philosophy.[24] After looking at each of the collections, Salwā's attention is drawn in particular to the works of Cervantes, whose *Don Quixote* is developed in two bound volumes, and then to the *Divine Comedies* of Dante.

Even beyond this, Salwā's recognition of World Literature in the series produced by the Hilāl publishers as just as much of a 'series' conceptually as *Don Quixote*, broadens further the possible conceptual links between 'texts' of the Palestinian nation. This begins with "the series emblem," which would have indicated to Salwā that the works were a collective. [25] This message, according to Genette, is that each of the works "fit a certain 'profile,' and … face up to it."[26] The shared font of the series, the generic designation, and indeed over time, a sort of branding meant to indicate variously the style, literary value, content or themes of a set of works thus links them together and creates that "profile" Genette wrote of. This was certainly the case for Hilāl's series of World Literature, not only through the process that the publishers engaged in to select, translate, include or exclude works from the designation, but also forming that which was included in 'world' as well as in 'literature.'

World Literature as a category that emerged between the Word Wars essentially opened up for debate and scrutiny not only the idea of the literary canon, but the definition of a masterpiece; it also made debateable what it meant for the written word to constitute literature.[27] It is also an amorphous and shifting category that has been the centre of criticism from feminist, postcolonial, and 'third world' writers and scholars seeking to open up the category to previously discounted voices. This concept, the development of a category of literature based on a shifting idea of just what literature entails, is also something that is useful for understanding the relationships between works in the Palestine

project. To imagine a body of work that is World Literature, is not unlike the process of imagining the relationship between, say, Salwā and the camp official who abuses her, or Fūʿad the ALA fighter and the loss to Zionist forces that sees Kahled's family in the Galilee sitting by the roadside of their destroyed village in 1948. Contested and complex, revisionist and constantly critiqued, the imagined Palestinian nation as an imagined site and the way a corpus of literature is literally embodied, represent analogous processes.

Salwā's interaction with the now classic works of literature draws attention to all of the different ways that texts can be in relationship. The example asks a reader to consider the relationship between the texts being put forward by the novel. This relationship is one formed through Genette's notion of the hypertext and publishers' paratextual devices, to Roland Barthes' notion of the meaning of the text not 'residing' in the text itself but in the interaction of language between one text and another.[28] This means not only that which connects the story of Salwā and those of Fūʿad and *al-ṣaghīr* (as in the link between *Purgatory* and *Hell*), but also that between the story of Salwā and the biography that the journalist ʿAbd al-Raḥmān writes. Here is also the first explicit clue that the network being developed in the series is specifically a national one. Just as Dante's *Divine Comedies* [variously translated as *al-Kūmidiya al-ilāhiyya* or *al-Malhāt al-ilāhiyya*] imagine as a unified conceptual space where the disparately located heaven, hell, and purgatory, can be imagined as connected scientifically, geographically, and scripturally, *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya*–which plays on the series title of *al-Malhāt al-ilāhiyya*—imagines the connections between the various locations, spatiotemporal moments, and power structures that constitute Palestine.

The texts of *Zaytūn*, for example, offer a microcosm of the inter-textuality being developed through the two series, and a template on which to begin thinking about how the device at once parses out and links together the worlds of its texts. The novel is composed of a multitude of texts, including Salwā's story, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's novel, the cassette tape interviews, the uncle's testimony, and the story of Khamīs and Līna. Part of the story that the novel tells is of the existence of these separate texts. Salwā's story, which exists only conceptually between the other parts of the novel, is given its independence through these imaginary frameworks. While Salwā struggles to have her own text recognized within the many texts that would seek to overwhelm it, it is only with a particular relationship between

all of these texts that her story is recognized. For *Zaytūn*, then, the concept of the inter-text is an essential component to the story, and it is a recognition of inter-texts that is of the foremost importance. It is little coincidence, then, that Salwā draws the reader's attention to the device of the series, as a way to distinguish and unite the developing idea of texts in the novel. Perusing the bookshelf at her teacher's home, Salwā wonders out loud why she never knew Dante and Cervantes wrote in series,' she answers to her own question:

> Because with everything that's around us, they'd rather us live in fragments. Fragments of bread, of books, of hope, of a dream—fragments of the homeland, and fragments of memory. Because they don't want this to be behind us, as if there being a single complete memory would suffice to return it to us. (64)

Within *al-Malhāt* (one of two parallel and intertwined series within the Palestine project), it is Salwā who suggests that linking texts and seeing narrative as a wider phenomenon not linked to the start and end of one work is a way out of conceptual fragmentation. What Salwā does, is insist that a single text cannot tell a 'whole' story. Just as her own story could only come out in the conversation between—and critique of—the different structures of narrative, so too is it the case that for a Palestinian national story, that can only emerge as a conversation of texts. Salwā intimates that that story is not 'complete' until it is put into relationship with all those that inform or add to it.

It is also through a reading of Dante that *Zaytūn* forges a way of imagining a single and whole Palestinian national space without borders, sovereignty, or homogeneous empty time. Beginning with the unified vision of a geo-spatial after-life developed by Dante, Salwā does her own stitching together of Palestinian worlds. Thinking about the concept of the series, Salwā continues to look at the bookshelf: "The *Divine Comedies*, I didn't understand the title, but put my hand out toward *Inferno,* [then] *Purgatory*, I liked it best of the books, and I opened it." Salwā then goes on to read two of its passages. The excerpts are not taken at random (although they appear to be), and in fact reveal some of the mechanisms through which the inter-textuality of *Zaytūn* and of *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya* are imagining a wider Palestinian national community; quite literally how a new way of thinking space can be achieved through thinking in series.

Salwā reads the precise passage that stitches together Dante's worlds of the divine; where once-unconnected purgatory meets heaven. In her wise selection, Salwā is commenting on

the place of her own narrative in the wider sphere of the Palestinian nation, and also showing readers the power of an imagined textual relationship. Picking up *Purgatory*, Salwā reads out loud:

> *"As is he who suddenly sees a thing before him whereat he marvels, and doth and doth not believe, saying, 'It is, it is not'."*
>
> Then I turned to its next pages:
>
> *"And lo! a sudden lustre ran from all quarters through the great forest, so that it put me in suspect of lightning."*[29] (63)

The unmarked lines come from Cantos VII and XXIX. The first is verse 12 of Canto VII, where Dante has just entered purgatory. The words of the quote are spoken at the precise point of confluence between hell and purgatory, by Dante's new guide who thinks it miraculous –or in his words, he "doth and doth not believe"—that his guide from Hell can pass through into the second world.[30] This is the crux of the masterstroke of the whole of the *Divine Comedies,* which set out a way to imagine the relationship between the spaces of afterlife both scientifically and theologically.[31] That Dante's new guide can see him, that he can observe as the writer-character stitches the worlds of the afterlife together through his narrative passage, and in so doing make it possible to think a new space.

The second passage Salwā reads out seems less straightforward. It comes from Canto XXIX, tens of pages later. Reading "lo! A sudden lustre," brings the story of Dante to the peak of the hill of purgatory, and is the start of a scene where the journeyers observe an allegorical play. According to critics, the play is performed for Dante to help him (and his reader) understand *Purgatory* at a deeper level.[32] In the source text, the "sudden lustre" (in the Arabic as *nūran surra*) that appears as if lightning, is in fact a light that literally illuminates a sort of play-within-a-play.[33] We thus come to a play within a text (*Purgatory*) that is an allegory within a series (*Comedia*). Readings of the allegorical play have suggested that the instance is not simply a moment of clarity in *Purgatory*, but is in fact one of the points within the wider *Comedia* that illuminate particular vision of the cosmos and the nature of god.[34] The play is meant to help a reader 'read' the multiple meanings of *Purgatory*, and to use this knowledge within the wider project of re-understanding the levels of afterlife as a single and unified sphere. This moment of illumination, the precise exclamation of "a sudden lustre [that] ran through all quarters of the great forest," is

brought in as an intertextual reference to point to how inter-textuality works not only in *Zaytūn*, but also in *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya*. The allegorical play works simultaneously as a metaphor for how intertexts (from a play-within-a-play to the device of the series) forge a wider spatial consciousness.

In the same way that the notion of purgatory tells a reader something about the criticism that *Zaytūn* is making of Palestinian society in the camps as a purgatory, and Dante's experience of the allegorical play helps him (and the reader) to understand the divine, so too are inter-texts (including hypotexts, architexts, hypertexts etc.) meant to illuminate "in suspect of lightning" (*k-innu al-birq)* the texts they are embedded in and related to. While Dante's *Comedia* aims to illuminate the path to salvation, *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya* is rather using texts and inter-text to create new relationships between texts, their times, and their spaces, the particular mechanisms of which are a foundational element of Naṣrallāh's project. The story of vulnerability and the struggle for meaning threaded through *Zaytūn* is the question of meaning for a community that "is […] is not" Palestine. Within the wider rhetoric of the Palestinian struggle, Palestinian refugees living in the camps are a constant reminder of displacement, their presence a constant reminder of a demand for return.[35] As Salwā remarks in the novel, the keys that many of the refugees held on to, and the Haifa Steel Workers card that her uncle keeps in his pocket (102), are meaningless except as markers of the past, and hopes for the future. Rather than suspending meaning-making for the moment of return, and remaining as a static signifier of Palestinian loss, inter-textuality allows an exploration of exile as one of the texts of nation. As an inter-text, *Purgatory* (and its perpetual waiting) is connected to Palestine's other locations not only spatially; as part of a larger network of texts it also becomes productive. No longer is the fruit of the 'olive trees in the streets' a waste, left to rot rather than germinate, "nothing real except us, waiting for ourselves" (13). As an inter-text—a story told as one part of the many stories that make up *Zaytūn*—Salwā's story has meaning even though it cannot be 'fit' into the frame of a biography.

What "is not" a novel, can still be told, can be, and "is," when it is integrated into the narrative as an independent text. Just as *Purgatory* is a location of waiting, it is also a location in its own right. Sitt Zaynab (who is not Palestinian but was married to one) articulates the sentiment when she wonders:

> Is it possible for me to be less of a stranger there, amongst my family? Sometimes I wonder: what did I lose there in Palestine, to come and live the life of a refugee here, only a few hours away from my homeland and my family. Sometimes I tell myself that it's possible for me to return to them, to the memories of my childhood, to revive them and live out what I did not live. But then there [would be] something that feels plucked out from me, there in Palestine is that thing called my life. (104)

To imagine Palestine, to imagine its refugees, is not to imagine only a return, Sitt Zaynab insists. To reduce the experience of Palestinian refugees to merely a signifier would be to "pluck" out formative moments and experiences not only for the individual refugees, but for the story of Palestine. Indeed, *Zaytūn* insists, the story of the refugees, the vulnerable, and those abused by the vulnerable, all illustrate the systems of power that have made Palestinian life un-tell-able, and must be grappled with if an alternative will be found.

As Dante's project describes and imagines three discrete locations in three discrete texts, so too does *al-Malhāt* imagine a way to connect Jerusalem to the hell of the Nakba, the heaven of the past, and the dispersed realities of the Palestinian present. Indeed, following Salwā's story of life in the camps of Lebanon come the story of a young woman in the Gaza Strip, and then that of a retired fighter returned to Ramallah in the wake of the Oslo Accords. Each text brings in the different experiences, characters, and power structures to be 'read in' to the larger Palestinian national story. Genette's hypertextuality thus provides the beginning of a model for understanding how one idea of Palestine can be conjured in series. In the case of the inter-textual nation, the multiple 'sequels' not only "extend meaning"[36] but link works into a national frame. Thinking the series as a constellation means that not only does inter-textuality reveal how to relate one 'text' or star to another, but extends each 'star' beyond its own location. Just like the map of Dante's universe [Fig 13], where the spaces in between hell, purgatory, and paradise were also taken up with imagined meaning, so too do the spaces between Palestinian worlds become linked through the imagination, and the spaces between the points in a constellation also take on meaning, though no sovereignty is claimed over them.

Adjacent space

The shifting zones of political action, the fluid political geography of the Middle East, and multiple trajectories of Palestinian exile mean the spaces of Palestinian experience become

layered with national meaning as populations, battles, and movements move through them. This logic applies not only to spaces of Palestinian experience, but also to the symbols and structures of power that Palestinians have at different points lived within. One space, one text, then, can be invested with many overlapping and contradictory meanings. Within an inter-textual constellation, the multiple possible 'alignments' of texts extend the space of the nation by allowing its spaces and symbols to be interpreted, extended, and re-read. This expands meaning and put texts into wider dialogues, creating an adjacent space that is charged with the possibilities of multiple possible readings. This adjacent space means that almost any location, event, or symbol (text) can—within the constellation—be adjacent to any other text at any given time or within any given interpretation of national meaning.

The ever-presence of a possibility for adjacent space means texts within the inter-textual constellation must always be open and ready for multiple and simultaneous modes of interpretation. This presupposed openness for multiple meanings describes as much of the character of inter-textuality as it does the nature of each text in the relationship. It means that locations or other signifiers in a text can, at any point, be taken up as signifiers within other texts. Where Dante's paradise could only be accessed through the intermediate purgatory, in the inter-textual world of Palestinian community, relationships between texts are much more diverse. Fū'ad's moustache, for example, must be recognized as a signifier of Arab honour, of masculine potency, of British might, and of genetic happenstance. This alignment of relationships tells the story of the young soldier, but the moustache might just as easily be harnessed as a signifier to describe other characters at other times, as in Sahar Khalifeh's novel *Wild Thorns*, where we learn that "those who don't go for prison, even for a day, will never become real men, even if they grow two moustaches rather than one."[37] The moustache, like the anemone (see Chapter 2), becomes a 'text' in its own right, claimed, extended, and developed as the nation extends in the imagination. It is this very possibility of inter-relationship that holds the collective of texts within as a single constellation. This is as much the case within the novels of the Palestine project as between them. The texts within the inter-textual nation are thus constantly in the process of extending the meaning of space, and extending the signification of symbols or events over new or old spaces, by creating a different concept of adjacency.

Manār's story, for example, ends when her brother guns her down in the street she grew up on. This is where the novel closes. However, the structure of *al-ʿĀr* had already closed off when the narrative loops of the text repeated the same scene that the final section had opened with (see part two of Chapter 3 for a full reading of the structure of the novel). While the first three of the sections had used the same closed and circular structure to start and finish each narrative loop, the fourth extends the text. The narrative loop began and ended with Manār heading to the airport, having been released from the women's prison. As with the earlier sections, the scene that opens and is eventually repeated (closing the loop). However, in the case of the final section the text is prolonged when Manār asks to visit her mother one last time. This detour expands the text, and opens the loop-structure that the novel had proceeded along. It is these pages that play out Manār's murder. Then, after the close of the final part, with Manār lying dead in the street, there is a sort of epilogue: Manār authors her own good-bye letter [Figure 15], which appears in *al-ʿĀr* as a hand-written note complete with words scratched out and letters that are barely intelligible. Making up two of the final two pages of the novel, Manār has the final word, and extends the space of the text.

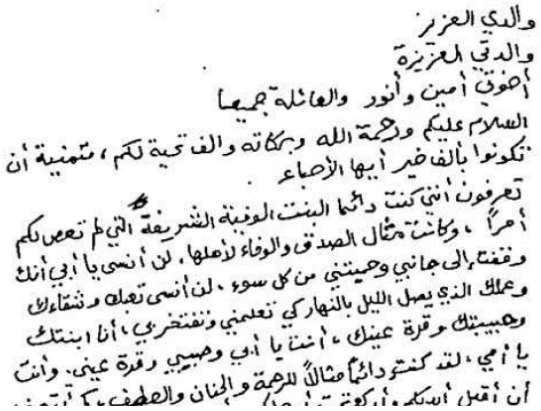
والدي العزيز
والدتي العزيزة
أخوتي أمين وأنور والعائلة جميعا
السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته والفاتحة لكم، متمنية أن
تكونوا بألف خير أيها الأحباء
تعرفون أنني كنت دائما البنت الوفية الشريفة التي لم تعص لكم
أمرا، وكانت مثال الصدق والوفاء لأهلها. لن أنسى يا أبي أنك
وقفت إلى جانبي وحميتني من كل سوء. لن أنسى تعبك وشقاءك
وعملك الذي يصل الليل بالنهار كي تعلمني وتفتخري، أنا ابنتك
وحبيبتك وقرة عينك، أنت يا أبي وحبيبي وقرة عيني. وأنت
يا أمي، لقد كنت دائما مثالاً للرحمة والحنان والعطف
أن أقبل

Figure 15: Segment of Manār's letter to her family

This epilogue has, in the words of Genette, "as its canonic function the brief exposition of a (stable) situation subsequent to the denouement, from which it results."[38] Manār's own voice, then, gets to give an explanation not only of what happened, but why. This is doubly significant since the letter is the first and only time in the novel that Manār addresses the reader in the first person. This position is reinforced by Genette, who makes mention of "actorial notes" in his *Paratexts*. "The (authentic) actorial note is obviously a variety of the allographic note, but a very distinctive variety," he observes. "Even if it does not, strictly

speaking, bear any stamp of the authorial …it takes on a highly unsettling type of authority—the authority not of the author but of his subject, who is himself often an author."[39] Manār's words do indeed unsettle the text, much less so in word than through that "highly unsettling type of authority" given to the actorial note/epilogue.

Creating the adjacent space offers hope for a future where women have agency within a social system that would otherwise see them killed, and hope for an alternative by forcing open the looped narrative and the structures of power that each loop symbolizes. The adjacent text opens the loops, because each must be read anew through Manār's narrative, which makes up one of the inter-texts of *al-'Ār*. The letter further reveals and undermines authoritative structures from the basic authorial narrator to the family code that sees her wiped out as if a 'stain' on their honour. Written after her release from prison, the letter excuses her brother ʾAmīn his behaviour, reassuring him that he will "remain in my thoughts," and thanks her father for "your efforts and your misery and your love" (235) to see her through university and raised as an independent woman. Her letter is quiet, unassuming, and on the surface, uncritical. It seems, at first, to bow to the family structure and its priorities, insisting "You know that I was always a faithful and honourable girl, who would never harden toward you, an example of trust and loyalty to her family" (235).

By insisting on her place within the family structure Manār is quietly demanding that it make room to accommodate her. This stance is reinforced with the bulk of her letter, which is addressed to her youngest brother, Anwār. "With me or without me you can realize miracles," (235) she tells him; miracles that will see a break in the bounded nature of the power structures they live within. Working toward a place at the national university under Manār's tutelage, Anwār is in many ways her legacy. It was Anwār, in particular, who challenged both ʾAmīn and the police as the representatives of two powerful structures sought to take Manār into their folds through either death or imprisonment. He had stood steadfast in front of his sister's bedroom door as first his eldest brother sought to confront her, and then when the police entered the home to take her into their custody. Named Anwār (lights), his name is the plural of Manār (beacon, single light), and growing up under her example he too has been raised with their father's vision for an alternative path that reads power structures as the problematic loops that they are. The extension of the text in the form of the letter gives agency to Anwār and subtly demands an alternative. The

letter, and the re-reading (the unsettling) it provokes for the text that preceded, is also a way of understanding how the space of the nation is imagined within the constellation. The letter does not change the content or meaning of the text that came before as text. It does, however, ask the reader to put it in a different perspective, to add on a reading and to see it in two simultaneous lights. With two distinct narrators—as Genette suggests, the voice of the body text has surrendered authority to the character—both voices must be given some weight, and neither destroys the other.

The parallel built into the story of Manār to the carnage in Gaza from December 26th 2008 to January 16th 2009 makes thinking the relationship between the textual element and the national almost too easy. Contrasting with the symbol of Gaza and its dead in the novel is the as-yet-untold (at least in *al-ʻĀr*) story *from* Gaza. Indeed, within the world of Manār Gaza remained an event, a global/national/international disgrace as the title of the novel suggests; something abstract signified by black banners and passing newscasts. The story of the events only appears with the flick of a channel so that instead of pop music, "the Aljazeera news is broadcast, the war on Gaza continues, and there are protests around the whole world" (151). While these newscasts are what bring the idea of the destruction of Gaza into the living room of Manār's family, the first hint that this is amore than local event comes with the newscaster comment that the violence is being protested "around the whole world." There is something larger at play, heralded by the black banner above Manār's door, so that her own struggles are paralleled with Gaza, and the fight for a solution for Manār a fight larger than one about her life and limb.

In the very intimation that the story of Gaza is one of disgrace (*ʿār*), is the understanding that multiple actors are implicated. To tell the story of Gaza, then, is as much as telling *how* what happened to Manār came to pass, as the event in and of itself. There is also the intimation that the missing story of Gaza—the missing story of Manār, until the last pages—must come at some point. Space is thus made for its eventuality, through the process of making space for Manār's story as it appears in her own words. In the same way as the structures of power and narrative must make room for Manār through her epilogue, so too are they being called to make room for the complex realities of Gaza. Even more than this, *al-ʻĀr* suggests that in order to understand—as *Aʻrās āmina*'s Randa might put it—"What is happening in Gaza" (5), it is not only to Gaza that one must look. Systems and

structures operating on Gaza are dictating its reality just as much as its people are living it. Reading the two together—being able to imaginatively stitch together structure and experience—is what expands not only the intellectual space within which we understand Gaza, but also national space. So, structures that operate on Gaza are also operating on, for example, Manār.

The processes are threefold: first, Manār's letter unbounds the looped structures and insists that a double reading be granted the text. This way of double reading is a model for the relationship between two sites in particular where one might seek to dominate the other. This gives space for the structures that affect Manār (or Gaza), and also means that Manār herself has the final word. Second, in understanding that the story of Manār is also the story of Gaza, the relationships between structures that prevail over Palestinians in diverse locations must be read as newly adjacent. That it is an *ʿār* for Manār's community to have allowed structures to operate that would see her murdered is the same *ʿār* for those structures to have moved forward (or been unchallenged) to perpetrate violence in Gaza. Finally, is the idea that an experience in one geotemporal location can also—although differently—affect a second. That the 2008-9 war on Gaza was taking place at the same time as Manār's victimization meant that the experiences of Palestinians in one place were constructing the symbols and signs for Palestinians in another. So, with the space of the text extended through Manār's epilogue, the space of the nation expanded as well. If the lives of Palestinians in Gaza in 2008-2009 and the experience of Manār in Amman at the events in one have a structural impact on the space of the other. Not only this, but understanding the connection further illuminates some of the undergirding problems of both situations. Each point in the constellation must thus also have 'read in' the structures of power that operate over them and the shame –both international and individual—of letting these structures continue to disgrace the nation.

This is how the concept of sovereignty that Fūʿad struggled with in *Ṭifl* can be understood to affect Yasīn, Salīm, and al-Duktūr as the three struggle against transformed concepts of freedom, control, and domination. It is the same concept in the story of Gaza during the timespan of Manār's life and death. The play for control and sovereignty over a territory remains a key structure when working to make sense of many Palestinian narratives, and the realities of its geotemporal spaces. Read as an authoritative epilogue, Manār's letter

prompts a double reading of an existing text. This inter-textual process overcomes the closed loop of a narrative or structure by ensuring it is opened to new interpretations. Through textual interventions within a novel, the novel itself is doubled. For *al-ʿĀr*, it means telling a story of the structures that see Manār killed, but also extending the national meaning of those structures by showing them as texts that not only subsume Manār because of their position of power, but are at the same time subsumed into her narrative through the authoritative afterword. In an inter-textual nation, texts can claim or be claimed by other texts. Through this process, their meaning and scope is extended, as is the imaginative space of the nation in terms of what, when, and where can be claimed as national, and also how that which is claimed as national can at the same time be read as problematic.

The imaginative space of the nation, as an inter-textual constellation, at once fractures and unites the texts of Palestine. At the same time as inter-texts disrupt hegemonic narratives imposed over space (and those within it) by structures of power; they also forge new ways of thinking the connections between spaces (between texts). That which is understood as national can thus be at once national and problematic; the hero of *ayām* Beirut and the hero of Oslo-era Ramallah can both claim and contest the national signifier, and Manār can claim to be an "honourable girl" even at the same time as her uncle claims her as a stain on the family's honour; both are 'true' in the sense that they are integral to the realities of the nation. In making possible an imagined connection between seemingly contradictory or unconnected structures, symbols, locations and experiences, the space of the nation is re-crafted. Here, the answer to Said's question, "Is there any place that fits us, together with our accumulated memories and experiences?"[40] becomes 'yes.'

Chapter 8 – Across multi-dimensions

Not only does the constellation map national space in ways that are not confined to concepts of linear time and bounded space, but it also creates alternatives for identity and community that do not rely on Anderson's description of individuals linked through imagined simultaneity within that bounded space. If Anderson's model can be explained by his convenient chart [Figure 16],[41] which lays out a linear time I, II, and III, and links characters through their located actions within a space circumscribed by their actions:

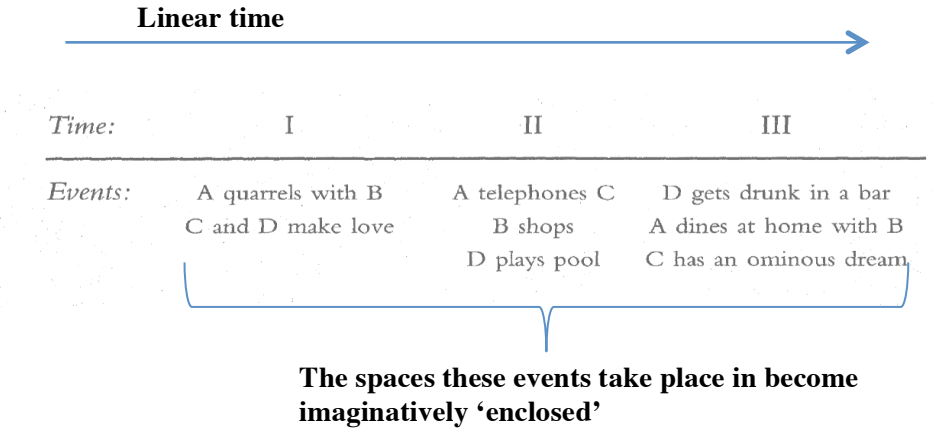

Figure 16: Anderson's simultaneity

Then, it is the imagination of the simultaneous community within a space that allows the imagination of the national. At the same time, as Anderson explains later, it is the apparatus of the state that claims individuals, groups, and symbols as national. He writes:

> Interlinked with one another, then, the census, the map and the museum illuminate the late colonial state's style of thinking about its domain. The 'warp' of this thinking was a totalizing and classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state's real or contemplated control: peoples, regions, religions, languages, products, monuments, and so forth. The effect of the grid was always to be able to say of anything that it was this, not that; it belonged here, not there. It was bounded, determinate, and therefore –in principle— countable.[42]

No longer within any sort of grid, or indeed beneath any singular or sovereign power that is enforcing one, what makes an individual, their experience, their identity, and their community national? And how does the constellation avoid in the question of identity, the same problematic limitations as the bounded nation state? Looking at three imaginative devices, which innovate models of connection between twins, doubles, and collectives, identity construction as an inter-textual constellation is revealed as flexible and multi-sited.

Twins

Described as "a foul bean that split" (31), Randa—one of *A'rās āmina*'s two protagonists—and her twin sister Lamīs are imagined as one embryo that cleaved, creating two bodies, identical in appearance. Though they began life as one entity, within the world of the Gaza Strip they are subjected to different experiences. So while they continue to be indistinguishable when side-by-side, the sisters play very different roles in the home and community. Randa, for example, is the writer, the intrepid, while Lamīs stays close to home.

For most of their lives, no one can tell the two apart just by looking at them; it is only their behaviour that distinguishes one from the other. So while on the one hand it is their lived experience that makes each unique, the twins maintain a special relationship that in fact allows them to trade 'personas' at will. Randa powerfully explains this in a scene that takes place days after her sister has endured the trauma of seeing their neighbour—a young boy—shot dead at an Israeli checkpoint:

> She became sad, so sad that [it seemed] she could no longer bear it, so I said to her: Lamīs, if you want me to be Lamīs for a day, or two, or ten, until you feel a little better, than I will be.
>
> And she said to me: I wanted to say the same words to you, because you are much more sad than I am; you haven't even cried. (40)

The selves that developed from their different social experiences here are constraining the healing of both girls. Stuck in the role of the brave sister, Randa is prevented from grief, while Lamīs, the 'sensitive' sister, cannot continue living because she is trapped in her sadness. The socially constructed (socially narrated) characters of the girls are getting in the way of an ability to live as complex and contradictory individuals.

The girls had often exchanged places by way of taking a rest from the confines of the socially constructed 'self.' Observing the two, and how—except for Ṣālih, the boy who falls in love with Lamīs—none catch on to their secret trades, a larger idea of the self and the collective is formed. To think the two women as a 'whole' (back to the foul bean and the invisible connection it gives them), a fascinating relationship between life experiences, the self, and community become at once distinct but connected. For example, Ṣālih does not quite see a 'difference' between the twins in terms of character or characterization. The boy (Āmina's son) grows up beside the twins and early on falls in love with Lamīs. To him, the girls are not 'Lamīs' and 'Randa,' in particular because the two trade roles so often. Frustrated at the constant game of impersonation, Ṣālih, just learning to talk, would chastise Randa:

> He would ask repeatedly: When will Lamīs come back?
> I would say: I'm Lamīs
> -No, you're the other Lamīs. (36)

For Ṣālih, the concept of Lamīs as a signifier for one twin and Randa for the other is confused by the game of deception the two would play. His description of the 'difference'

between the two, however, begins to develop the idea of representation of collectives within the novel. It becomes a question of formulating the self within a whole. The novel is developing a way of narrative whereby neither the identity of the self nor the collective are stable—as in codified or defined—but somehow remain discernible. There is Lamīs and the 'other' Lamīs, for example, but Ṣāliḥ knows precisely which one he is in love with.

At the same time the idea of the twin as the basis for a collective is being developed through the characters of Randa and Lamīs, it is extended by the paratextual history of *A'rās*, and its very specific relationship with *Taḥta shams*. When the novels were initially published in 2004, they were released within the same bound volume. The book's cover indicated that there were two novels inside (*riwāyatān*). Within the covers, each novel had its own title page, and cover art, distinguishing the two stories. In later editions, the works were published separately, with nary a mention of their shared past. The novels, like Randa and Lamīs, can be read in many ways as 'twin' texts.[43] The transition to thinking the link between not only individuals but locations is made simple here, since both *Taḥta shams* and *A'rās āmina* treat the same period of time, but in two locations. They are the only novels in the series thus far to examine the same time period or event, and in so doing, link the experience of Intifada in the two spaces. The Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip thus become one story in two parts. By pairing the novels the two settings become twin territories, and a single experience of Intifada emerges over two sites. Mirroring Rania and Lamīs, the two novels are of the same 'origin,' a single book that split, like the foul bean, into two. Also like the twins, the books are independent but related entities.

To read the works as national means that a single Palestinian experience (or location) does not set the parameters for what it means to be national, and nor does the national define what it means to exist in a certain place. The two are fluid, and mutually constituting. This idea is underscored tragically when Lamīs dies. Having spent her life playing with social conventions and trading places with Lamīs, Randa is suddenly in danger of being reduced to 'Randa.' Randa's response to the death of her sister is to refuse to tell her mother which of the girls has died. Claiming at times to be Lamīs and at other times Randa this becomes a way to deny the loss and maintain the sum of the life experiences of the small collective that the twins embodied. So long as Randa claims to be Lamīs, the latter still exists, and Randa retains the ability to include both within herself. When challenged on this behaviour,

Randa insists: "I want people to know that she didn't die" (136). Lamīs—and the experiences she had—has not died. Randa is able to keep these experiences alive as part of herself through the device of the twin. By thinking the link between Palestinian experiences and Palestinian nationhood along these lines, the many locations of a Palestinian past (be it in Beirut, Tunis, or the Galilee) can be absorbed into a 'whole.' They are all parts of a split bean.

This same mechanism allows the imagination of the Intifada as a part of what has come to constitute a Palestinian national experience; yet another 'text' in the nation constellation. Shared between two geographies, the experience of uprising against Israel's occupation was a single movement, but one that must be understood as distinct in each location, guided by particular circumstances. In turn, *both* of these experiences make up what the uprising meant to Palestinians in a wider sense. As one of the experiences of the imagined whole—that metaphorical foul bean—it can be drawn on or claimed by all; be they in Lebanese camps or exiled in the Gulf. This is what makes the intifada national. It is also what makes it inter-textual. Just as the twins form a collective able to share lived experience, so too do the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza form a collective. The situated experiences, moreover, can be shared as national experience even with those who have not lived it. Intimately and incontrovertibly related yet distinct, the twin characters, like the twin novels, imagine meaningful relationships between one discrete 'text' and another. In understanding how an event like the Intifada can be shared between two discontiguous locations, in the same way as the experience of the Intifada can be shared between two discrete characters, we can imagine more of the connections that make up the inter-textual nation.

Not only does the device of the twin reveal one of the mechanisms of relationship between texts, but it also adds conceptual depth to the imagined constellation. This is in particular the case when twins are put within a wider national context. Take, for example, the relationship of the twin texts *Taḥta shams* and *A'rās āmina* (this works for Randa and Lamīs as well) to *Zaytūn*, published two years earlier. The three works form a definite phase of writing within *al-Malhāt* and indeed the Palestine project, but if *A'rās* and *Taḥta shams* are twinned, how can their relationship to *Zaytūn* be described?

Figure 17: Twin texts within a collective

The works are neither parallel, nor sequential. Indeed, none of the terminology describing the relationships of objects in two-dimensional space quite work –for example, they are not quite oblique (I/) or orthogonal (I–), or a point where a path diverges (Y), since things get even more complicated after the publication of *Taḥta shams*, with the inauguration of the *Shurafāt* series. None of these terms account for the inter-relationships between the texts that have already been written or those that will follow. Nor do they allow for the complex positioning of texts with relation to each other. Neither novel is above or below the other, in particular when it comes to their connection(s) to the subsequent novels, and the language of anatomy (proximal, distal, lateral etc.) misses the mark for its assumption of a central core, privileging the centre as a referent for all the parts. The turn, again, must be to astrology, where stars are mapped according to a complex set of relational coordinates. A literary/imaginative mapping, however, would be slightly different from an astronomical one. To adequately describe the relationship between texts (understood broadly), a complex equation would need to be built that takes into account all of the variables and their dimensions, across time (x), space (y), theme (z), structure (t), and idea (v), and positioning the works as if they are star-coordinates.[44] By taking these texts off of a linear plane, the possible connections become almost infinite.

Doubles

The multi-dimensional nation and the nature of the relationships that knit its texts together are further developed through the idea of the double. *Taḥta shams* and *Aʿrās āmina* are indeed twin texts—that foul bean that split just like Randa and Lamīs, or the West Bank and Gaza—but they also both make use of the device of the double as a way to extend and expand the developing concept of collectivity. The idea is stretched most perceptibly in *Aʿrās āmina*, where the two narrators are Randa and Āmina. The way they tell their stories reveals how different structures of power operate unequally and in different ways on each woman, even though they live side-by-side and experience the same set of events.

While Randa's chapters read like a personal diary, an "attempt to understand," Āmina's record a (mostly one-sided) conversation with her (mostly absent) husband. From the subjects she reflects on to how she gets along with her neighbours, the story Āmina tells is addressed to and responds to the structurally-determined needs of first her husband, and later her son. Āmina does not struggle with the structure of news narrative. For the wife and mother, it is the way that the occupation and its violent limitations on life prescribe what is possible within the patriarchal system. This is telling, and reveals how much –as wife and mother—Āmina's story is dictated by gender structures, and in turn, how much gender structures are influenced by violence. This becomes more and clear as her son Ṣāliḥ grows up. It becomes Āmina's job to find him a wife, a duty that changes how she interacts with Randa, and also dictates her very reason for narrating.

Āmina's narrative frame is created by what Kate Millet calls 'sexual politics.'[45] Described as "the birth right priority whereby males rule females," this sexual politics is "a most ingenious form of 'interior colonization'" that "provides [a] most fundamental concept of power."[46] Millet is describing a particularly American manifestation of the phenomenon, but in its position as a structure of power, a look at her argument helps to define just what a power structure is, and how it can be understood in *al-Malhāt* and the Palestine project as 'texts.' Sexual politics is a "fundamental concept of power" in the same way as violence, and narrative are. They constitute a structure of power that assumes and assigns set values for defined individuals or ideas. In Āmina's chapters, sexual politics are revealed as a frame for narrative; something that structures not only what is told, but how it is narrated.

Thus, sexual politics, and assumptions about gender and role that frame Āmina's world, can also be read into the narrative of Randa, to the politics of the newspaper, and into each of the earlier works in the series. Reading sexual politics –or issues of gender—as a narrative frame that functions in the same way as notions of sovereignty, space, or history, reveals the mechanisms by which it restricts or limits a subject or idea. This is not only perhaps necessary for a truly relational network of the texts within an inter-textual nation, but understanding the uneven operation of some texts on others is part of what a reader is asked to do when shifting between the narratives of Āmina and Randa. The doubling narrative technique, in first exposing the distinct structures of power operating differently on each of the women, also asks through the plot device of their paralleled experiences for

a reader to put the dominant structure of one woman into conversation with the other (and vice versa). It is with this frame that the intervention of sexual politics (specifically the politics exposed in Āmina's experience) into Randa's life is to be read. The intervention comes initially as a proposal of marriage, it comes from Āmina, but it is for Lamīs.

The request comes early in the morning, informally, and amid the uncertainty of the Second Intifada. Āmina knocks on Randa's door early in the morning, and on the threshold, asks for her blessing to request Lamīs in marriage for her son. It is an awkward moment between the women. Randa is the older twin, and would by tradition marry first. Moreover, as it is often the work of the groom's mother to choose a bride, the choice is often for her own favourite. It is not a question that Āmina had wanted to ask as a friend since she would have preferred the elder twin as a daughter-in-law, but, as a mother, she has little choice, and according to the sexual politics of her community must defer to her son. This is because Ṣāliḥ, Āmina's son, has been for a long time in love with Lamīs. Āmina is distressed, "It wasn't possible to imagine how wonderful the girl [Randa] was, and God, if he [Ṣāliḥ] loved her a little she should have engaged him to her and not to Lamīs" (26). As Ṣāliḥ comes of age, however, he insists that Lamīs is the only one he will marry. It is Ṣāliḥ's shift from boy to man, and his love for Lamīs that brings the question of sexual politics (the power structure of gender, or family) into Randa's life. With no father or brothers at home, she had until then been centrally subject to structures of violence (of occupation), and the narrative form of the newspaper. So while sexual politics was playing out in her community, it was not the most relevant structure for her own struggle.

The way that issue is narrated in Āmina's chapters is fascinating. Where Randa's chapters come more and more to resemble a reaction to, or countermeasure for the way that newspapers or satellite stations tell the story of "what's going on in Gaza," Āmina's chapters eventually become a dialogue with her absent husband. While Randa records the scenes around her for her own writerly development, Āmina's words become less and less her own. Even after her husband is gone Āmina's narrative is *to* him, echoing the way that Salwā's story was told *to* ʿAbd al-Raḥmān. Here, for example, Āmina justifies her concern over the Lamīs-Ṣāliḥ match to an absent authority figure, as though wishing for permission to deny Ṣāliḥ's request:

> The difficult thing is that Randa is older than Lamīs, I know it's only by five minutes and no more, but she is older and she has the right to look at her mother and father and sister and say she wants to marry first. (27)

The justification to an absent husband remains unacknowledged, and without an authority figure there to trump the desire of her grown son, the situation is dictated by Ṣaliḥ. Āmina's role as wife and mother not only structure her narrative, but also how she must interact with her community.

The relationship between the chapters, and the notion of doubling developed in the novel helps make clear the inter-textual relationships between power structures. The idea is at its most simple in the very title of the novel: *A'rās āmina*. The compound can be translated in a number of ways, each which relies on and builds on layered meanings. The most typical title is *Amina's Weddings*. This refers at once to Āmina's wedding to Jamāl (the absent husband to whom her narratives are directed), which brought them to the neighbourhood and also to Ṣaliḥ's demands that his mother arrange a wedding between him and Lamīs. The title can, at the same time, be read as *Safe Weddings*, with a play discernible on the concept of 'safety.' Since '*āmina*' does not just mean "safe" as in a place free from harm, this one possible meaning is put in tension with another, *āmin* as the term used in the ubiquitous *āmin al-dawla*, or 'state security.' As a phrase often-cited as an excuse for Israeli military action in Gaza, in particular during the Second Intifada when the events of the novel are set, *āmin* is at once safety and danger. This ties in with the already well-known practise of holding weddings for the martyrs of the Intifada, so that in celebrating their death the martyr "becomes a bridegroom, who like the real bridegroom through his marriage ensures the perpetuation of his community—not through procreation but through the restoration of collective memory."[47]

Amid the violence of Gaza, the structures of power have created a doubled meaning for both the wedding and the funeral, which the title of the work plays on. By adding the concept and character of *āmina*, the notion of safety, or indeed 'security' plays upon gender and cultural concerns particular to Palestinian society in the context of violence, and in the context of sexual politics. Under occupation, "safety" and "security" are often at odds, and the latter is much more attached to a "topology of power" directly connected to the interests of a military and its nation-state.[48] The same double meaning also applies to the question of weddings, which are repeatedly paralleled with violence in the text. In the opening pages,

Randa describes how air or artillery strikes had become so commonplace, that her family frequently confused them for someone knocking at the door: the domestic and the violent are one and the same. Even Āmina's early knocking on the door is cast (ominously) within this doubled paradigm. After she leaves, Randa's mother asks who was at the door:

> Who was at the door this early in the morning? My mother asked without opening her eyes.
> - It was just the sound of bombs, I told her, adding, the sound of bombs. (9)

The marriage, she intimates, will do as much violence to her life as encroaching bombs. It would also signal the moment of change where Ṣālih's marriage is at the centre of Āmina's world, and the encroachment of a system of sexual politics.

Just as the doubled meaning of the title contradicts and overlaps, and is developed in the novel specifically as contradictory and overlapping, so too for the power structures of gender, violence, and narrative. Each shadows the other, and exists inter-textually, so that understanding how each relates to the other gives new angles, nuance, and a broader picture to the experience of the characters. The multiple structures of power, moreover, are necessary as texts to parse out the dense, relational, and layered meanings of sentences like the following, where Randa asks Āmina about the damage done by overnight Israeli shelling, which repeats words with the same root, *a-m-n* (underlined): "didn't they strike the tombs? […] won't there be any safe space left? […] Even the graves of the martyrs aren't safe Āmina" (55). The phrase ties together the many layers of violence unearthed by the text. She links the opposition of safety/security, the idea of the tombs as a place to escape violence (as Salwā showed), the symbol of the martyr in terms of limiting the representation of an individual, and back into the question (now very much a question) as to whether either weddings or Āmina can offer any degree of safety within the prevailing situation.

The doubling of narrators and revealing the differential functioning of linked and layered structures on individuals can be observed in their uneven complexity of these if mapped out in the form of a constellation. To imagine sexual politics and political violence as two 'texts' within the national constellation, to understand how they affect Randa and Āmina differently is simply to recognize that the two are located differently within the multiple planes of national meaning. So if Randa and Āmina are both located at space (s) Gaza and

event (e) Second Intifada, they are located—say—closer or further from sexual politics (p) and political violence (v). Their stories at once belong to the 'texts' of each of these mapped locations, telling a reader something about each of the variables (we learn something about Gaza, sexual politics, the Intifada, etc. etc.) but also about Randa and Āmina themselves. Each is distinct yet related, and in understanding where things fall in relation to their others, a wider and more intricate map of not only what it means to be an individual within the national, but also the nature of national texts, can be gleaned.

This concept of the double and its utility in parsing out the many modes of national relationship within the constellation is echoed in a slightly different arrangement in the relationship between Salīm, Yasīn, and al-Duktūr. Much like in the case of Āmina and Randa the operation of different structures of power (here, the national hero, the occupation, the government made by the Oslo Accords) can be seen to operate differentially on the three characters, shaping their lives and their reactions to Ramallah life in different ways. Through the device of the play the impact of these relationships on the individual is explored, and the part that national identity plays. Amid the structures of power, of narrative, and the texts of the nation, the question becomes one of locating the individual, and observing how the doubled characters variously adopt, reject, or are challenged by other national texts.

For Salīm, claiming the character of the national hero is a mechanism of defence. For him the ideal of the fighter is less of a prison than a shield, and he problematically takes it on so that it consumes him. What the relationship between Salīm and al-Duktūr reveals is a domino effect of dominance. As al-Duktūr continues to criticise Salīm, and while the young actor's life passes "without flavour or soul" (25) Salīm increasingly sees the play as his "door to life" and eventually admits that "he had fallen under the spell of a character who didn't know he wanted to play his role on stage, or in truth, in life!" (21). So as Salīm prepares the play he "felt that he was facing his destiny, and his body would be gripped by his theatre performance" (63). In writing Yasīn, Salīm has taken on and claimed as his own part of the national narrative, access to which had until then been dictated by al-Duktūr. So, while hostility toward the PA came in part from the new government's "need to assert its authority internally, given its relative inability to assert its authority externally, especially in relation to Israel,"[49] Salīm also came to dominate Yasīn when he had the chance, unable as

he was to see himself in al-Duktūr's version of power, or the nation. The question comes to a head when Yasīn is released from prison a second time, and a relative tells him that the play is still being performed:

> The play's being performed in the heart of Ramallah, Naʾim said to him.
> What play?
> Yours.
> You mean Salīm's?
> Yes
> But he never told me. (119)

When Yasīn goes to the city and seeks out the theatre, "found his second self on the stage without having ascended to it" (119), and his life had been fully coopted by Salīm, who was using it to get out from under the thumb of al-Duktūr.

When Salīm learns that his muse has been released from Israeli custody, things start to fall apart. He has become Yasīn, but with the 'real' Yasīn now free, the question of identity and locating the self with the structures of the nation reaches its apex. The novel enters a period of delirium, kicked off when a fan asks Salīm to sign a program for her: "I want your signature, but not with your name Salīm Nasrī, but rather with the name of the character you portray" (155). Feeling unsettled, Salīm reassures himself that, "There is only one Yasīn in the theatre, in the world!" (157), but for the reader, and indeed for Salīm, it is not clear whether he means himself, the character, or the man just released from prison. Salīm begins hallucinating, talking to himself as though he is Yasīn-in-the-present. On stage after the show, he paces, saying "You seem to have forgotten that I gave you permission to turn the story in to a play for a night or two but no more, and I didn't give you permission by any means to turn it into my life as though you were its owner" (158). It is once again unclear if it is the 'real' Yasīn who has spoken or Salīm in character (or out of character). The words that the character speaks, then, but be read as double, until one of the lines recited strikes a chord with a woman cleaning out the theatre. It turns out to be Salīm still performing on stage, as if talking, as Yasīn to himself (as Salīm): "You transformed me until I became a hero, but the measure of a hero here has no meaning. I'm a hero because I have a story… those who fill the streets, women, children, sheikhs, each one of them could be heroes if they had a story" (158). It is here that the woman clearing out the seats in the audience interjects, asking out loud, "Why didn't you say that in the play? It's important, I

felt he was talking about me! Will you use it tomorrow?" (158). To this, "Salīm turned, and tried to understand whether he had heard the words now, or if he had heard them from Yasīn a long time ago" (159). Neither Salīm nor the reader are at times sure who has spoken. The texts of the nation have become so embedded in the life of the actor that it becomes impossible to understand where one starts and the other ends.

The same delirium sets in with Yasīn. He gets confused, and has trouble locating his own identity amidst the many forces at play. The identities and the structures of power seem to act on the two men so that they merge. Watching Salīm perform, Yasīn "saw nothing but his own movements [on the stage,] he felt he was seeing a ghost who looked like him but did not look like him" (171). In the dialogue between texts—between Yasīn and Salīm, their life experiences, and the structures of power that they live within—a ghost-text appears, putting both men and the politics they are a part of in relief. Yasīn returns to the theatre a second time (if he was indeed there in the first instance), planning to intervene and say something during the performance. As he wonders what he will say, Salīm sees Yasīn in the audience and—thinking he is still in prison—falters:

> A voice erupted from the darkness of the audience: Did you forget the role?
> […]
> It sounds like my voice, Yasīn said
> It sounds like his voice, Salīm said. (171-2)

The words ring out in the theatre, but there is ambiguity over who says them. Neither man can tell who spoke; Salīm has perfected his part and Yasīn continues to struggle against his own imprisonment in the role of the fighter. 'Yasīn' is both on and off the stage; the location of his speech is unclear. It is no longer a question of individuals, "he felt like he was seeing a ghost who looked like him exactly but did not look like him" (171), and no longer could Yasīn tell what was remembered, what was fictionalized, and what his real self was. He says to himself, utterly unsettled, "the ghost forgot, he forgot a great deal, just like memories forget, even though they are called memories" (171). With the figure of the double, the text and its past become thickened, develop a depth that connects the parts across multiple dimensions.

Locating Yasīn, a character, a play, a man, a prisoner, a fighter, a lover, a returnee, alongside Salīm, the actor, the playwright, the recorder of memories, becomes nearly

impossible. One voice is merged with the other, and the question of identity becomes one of what elements an individual claims, not what they are. While Yasīn may have been a fighter, "the ghost forgot," amid his current fight to belong in a changed Ramallah. Somewhere within the performance of the self, memories of the past self, and the elements of the self that are imposed by structures of power and sexual politics, is the individual. To understand how that conglomeration is national, and is national without losing the complexity of pasts and structures, it is the astronomical calculations that once again rescue an individual from imprisonment in national forms. It becomes a question of representation, of what to include, of deciding what structures or what symbols are useful in the making up of an individual at any given time. Thinking this as a constellation, both men can have the identity of the fighter Yasīn, which can in turn be located within the structure of power that is the national symbol of the hero/fighter. At the same time, Yasīn can be more than his past, and so can the representation of it. Both can transcend through alternative connections that the constellation allows.

The inter-textual double, with undefined limits and a perpetual relationship with its other, becomes like Genette's hypertext, where each: "can be read for itself without becoming perceptibly "agramatical," it is invested with a meaning that is autonomous and thus in some manner sufficient. But sufficient does not mean exhaustive."[50] As fragments-in-relationship, the double is a mode of inter-textuality that, as a technique in form and an element of plot, escapes in some manner both authority and linearity, giving the reader access to seemingly limitless grey areas as the text opens to interpretation. In the repeated scene, for example, the doubling shows a continuation of Yasīn's village life despite his death. In not precisely replicating the scene, at the end of the novel, where Umm Walīd professes her love for her husband (Chapter 9), for example, the technique echoes Yasīn's own determination that return does not mean repetition, and that doubling leave space for change.

The mechanism by which to carry out the imaginative feat of astronomical-collective making is even built into Salīm's journey as a playwright and actor. As he develops the play, Salīm and al-Duktūr butt heads over how the character is to be performed. The director wants Salīm to take over Yasīn as an idea, make Yasīn-the-hero his own, and to play him on stage as almost a parody of the former fighter. For al-Duktūr, Yasīn is not a

man, but the inspiration for a caricature. At the other end of the representational spectrum, is the idea of Brechtian estrangement introduced by a European theatre troupe that comes to train in Ramallah and workshops Brecht's techniques. In Brecht's words, "the aim of this technique, known as the alienation effect, was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism in his approach to the incident [so that] the actor must invest what he has to show with a definite *gest* of showing."[51] Though estrangement of the audience, from the 'magic' of the story unfolding on stage was popular with revolutionary Palestinian theatre performers in the 1970s and 80s,[52] Salīm rejects the idea, which is explained parenthetically within the novel:

> He could not talk about Yasīn in the third person as Brecht explained (to use techniques of distancing and the past tense to put the actor at an appropriate observable distance so that there is a distance created between him and the character) because the text, from the moment he started writing it, was a conversation, as though Yasīn al-Asmār was the one talking over the body of Salīm Naṣrī, on the stage, not the opposite. (22)

Instead of creating a character that theatregoers can at once observe but be critical of, Salīm rather aims to become Yasīn through the performance, in large part as a way of mobilizing the trope of the nation in his own way, as a defence against the abuse of al-Duktūr. Rejecting Brecht's technique also comes because Salīm *wants* the magic of the theatre. The parenthetical note giving the definition of Brecht's technique and the philosophy behind it hints at the separate-ness of the hero-text and Salīm. He feels so dissatisfied in his own life that he wants to minimize the distance between himself and the power of the national hero, and to become that power.

Bringing in Brecht, however, was not by accident. It draws attention to the possibilities of narrative to create critical distance. It asks readers to look at texts and to judge them critically, to engage in the game of "smoking and watching." It becomes the job of the reader and the author to create and locate dissonance. This dissociates the symbol from the individual, the location from the nation, and structures of power from identity, so that one does not mutually constitute the other. Rather, each can be located as distinct but intertwined elements. The texts of the nation constellation through inter-textuality are made to "appeal less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with things."[53] This of course is precisely what Randa in *A'rās* is doing in her own writing, when she asks, "How many pages would

Ghassān Kanafānī have written if he wanted to say the story of Umm Saʿd in all its minute detail?" (61). Randa's writing seeks not simply a corrective for the portrayals of playwrights like Salīm, which is by default tied in with the problematic frame of the dominant structure, but a mechanism for telling the story of an individual without the reductive nature of a text meaning certain death for a living idea. To plot out within a constellation the differences between all of the Yasīns present in the theatre would be to create a constellation, with experiences, locations, and temporalities all held in place by the gravitational pull of their others. The inter-textual criss-crossing of storylines creates infinite constellations, with their relationships—doubling, referencing, shadowing, building on, transforming—making Yasīn an amorphous whole made out of an identity and multiple national texts.

Palestinian collectives

The same mechanism is at work in the representation of collectives. Inter-textuality and the figure of the constellation make it impossible to write a singular collective in the sense of a dominant identity being imposed on a group. Building on the device of the twin, the notion of shifting claims on social identity markers, and the idea of the double that allows the differential impact of social structures to be seen on the individual, the collective is also conjured as flexible and in flux. The idea of the compiled and inter-textual nation, and how its many parts inter-relate, continues to be expanded. Understanding where an individual starts and ends when it comes to a collective, and when collectives take over the idea of the individual comes up most clearly in *Aʻrās*. For example, Randa relates the story of two men, killed together in an Israeli air strike. The description of the aftermath of the strike is gruesomely poignant, but aims to show how, like life, common death can also unite individuals into a 'whole,' creating a collective that allows for an expanded sense of individual identity within a national frame. Randa explains:

> We spent two days scrubbing [their remains] off the walls and roofs of the houses. When we gathered them into bags, we realized we couldn't tell the flesh of one from the other. We asked ourselves; why not bury them in one grave? They refused. But tell me aunt Āmina, isn't it better? Why should the martyrs work to find their body parts from another grave on the day of judgement? (56)

Though gory, that in death the flesh and blood of the two men is indistinguishable stresses the idea of a 'single flesh,' in the same way Randa and Lamīs had been a split foul bean. As she picks up the pieces of the men, so that their bodies might be buried whole, Randa wonders if it would not be more of a violence to try and artificially separate the parts of the tragic union. The two men are one, she concludes, and so they must remain until an unknown point in the future (or indeed, in the imagination). Their stories are tied, their experience of death wedded, they are individuals but a whole, and harm would be done to try and separate them.

The idea is built on in a final and extended scene that sees Āmina's husband killed. The story is also tragic, but goes to show how a collective—a whole—might be created around common experience, common grief, and national symbolism, but at the same time not be a whole that limits the individuals within it. Seeing the news of the man's death on television, Āmina is sure it is her husband Jamāl and goes to the hospital to identify his body and collect it for burial. When she gets to the hospital, however, she finds the body unrecognizable, and the doctor tells her there are twenty other women who claim that he belongs to them. She replies:

> - He's my husband
> - Twenty women have come to see him and said he was their husband
> - Twenty women? No, Jamāl has only one wife and that's me. (90)

Funerals for the unidentified man, Randa narrates, are held across the Gaza Strip (92), with each of the twenty women insisting that the body is of their missing husband, brother, or son. Āmina, who even after Jamāl's death continues to narrate her chapters *to* him, reflects: "They didn't know if you were you or if you were someone else, some other martyr" (92). The episode, which lasts through multiple chapters, shows how through a common experience, a single man's body comes to represent the grief and loss of tens of women, uniting them in their mourning, and creating a collective.

The twenty women, each believed to be the intimate family of the unidentifiable diseased, daily attend the graveyard where the body is buried. The twenty women become one woman: the mother of the fighter, the widow, and the bereaved. They are, in a sense, Umm Saʿd, but they are also their own selves. This multiplicity becomes apparent when, one by one, they either find the bodies of their missing husbands, their brothers return home for a

brief visit before going into hiding again, or turn up injured in the hospital. The numbers of mourners at the grave quickly reduce to twelve, but these remaining women continue to practise the ritualized community formed around collective loss. One of the younger women does not appear at the gravesite for four days, then returns, sobbing and embarrassed. She explains to Āmina that her fiancé had returned, and she had cried for joy, but then felt guilty about her happiness whilst there were so many women still at the grave. She promises to continue coming to the cemetery, asking the other women "How can I go and leave you by yourselves?" (96) The other women insist, however, telling her "Don't come back" (96) and to remain with life instead of being tied to death.

So, although the women are united by death, becoming the strong spectre of the 'mother of the fighter,' they are not bound to the symbol. When it is time for life, they say, the shadow must be cast off. A text, an experience, is just codifying or magnifying "a moment," but that moment must not imprison or delimit others. Though its plot devices *A'rās* is able to show a flexibility of narrative, where moments are lived, and collectives are realized, but the individuals participating in them can also be realized as belonging to other collectives, none of which define or delimit all of the possibilities of that self. In order to understand the individual within the national imagination, both must be understood as open and operating under the influence of a multitude of other differentially simultaneous forces. Not only does a collection of texts create the space of the national literary utterance, but within that space associations and conglomerations can be activated and deactivated when they become necessary.

Imagine, for example if the 2D representation of a Palestinian national constellation [Figure 18][54] were in 3D:

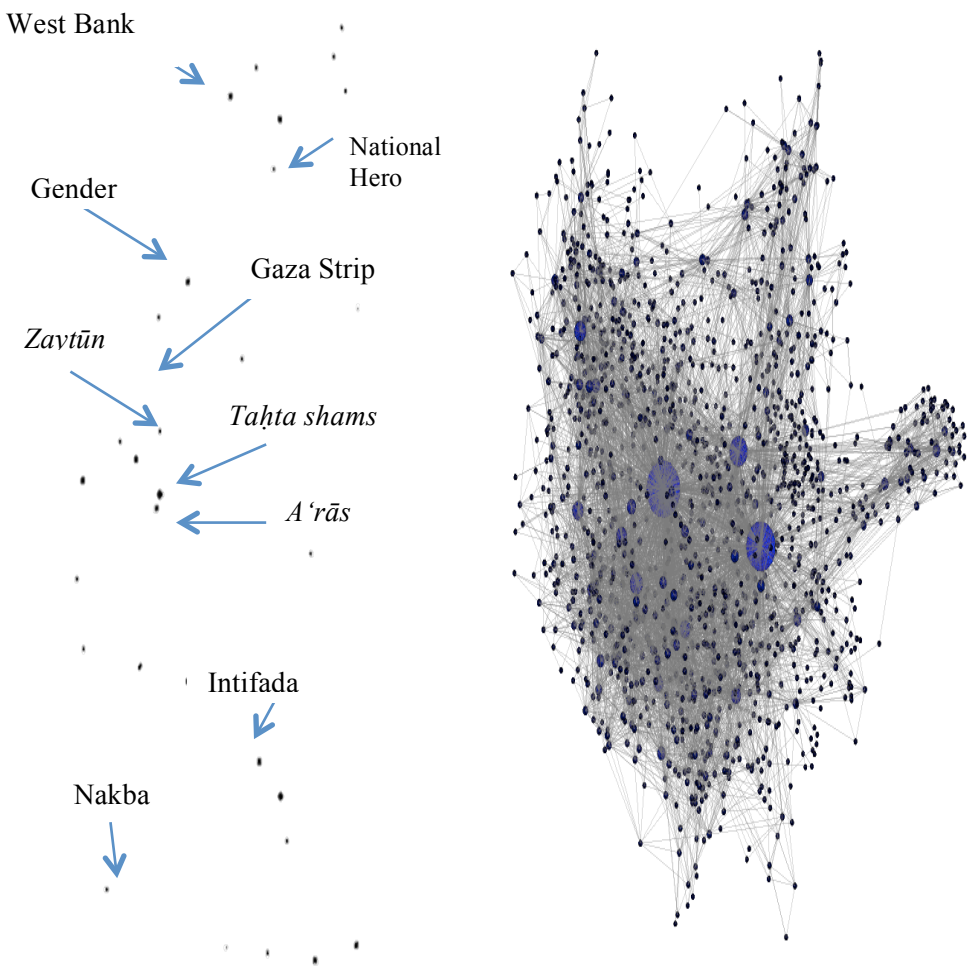

Figure 18: The nation constellation and its many relationships

To be fully inter-textual, and open to the infinite connections between texts that are and might one day be possible, the constellation of stars might better be seen in the mind's eye as one that is not on paper, nor even suspended in a mobile, but rather within a constantly moving universe. This would give the points new dimensions, a depth of field, allowing a viewer the opportunity to see how the different texts align—gender now with Gaza, and when the constellation rotates, with the national hero—depending on their vantage in relation to the shifting plains. If one could stretch the imagination and observe how the texts aligned in four or more dimensions, an 'accurate' picture of the inter-textual nation might finally be formed. If a narrative becomes the stable association of parts, the national narrative is the sum total of the shifting relationships between parts, and the individual as well as their collectives participate within that constellation as the realities of life see associations (and locations, and events) change, or new 'texts' added. Plotting the texts as

stars in the sky gets around the problem of visualizing relationships as static, and gives room for postponed, partial, or flexible interpretation depending on the texts that come afterward (or backward, or beside). Imagine, for example, that the stars are in motion, so that from one point of view the alignments of its parts shift and spin along multiple and simultaneous axes. The relationships between the parts, and what influence each part has on its others, is constantly in flux, and along myriad axes that are themselves changing and multiplying.

Chapter 9 – Infinite text

The constellation has no chronology. There is no 'first' or concept of origin. In a constellation, inter-texts are added as and when they are presented. The nation is formed and re-shapes with each text, regardless of when or where they are set or were published. This dis-chronological structure was set out early in the Palestine project, and is particularly apparent through the collection of works that make up *al-Malhāt*. The epic project to tell the national story of Palestine was initiated in the late 1990s by a novel set in the 1950s. The story of the nation continued across time and through space and expanded to include, in 2013, the story of 18th century Tiberius. Further pushing the idea of the non-chronological nation, *Mujarrad 2 faqaṭ* was adopted into the series retrospectively in 2014, thirteen years after it was first published. That which is determined as national, then, need not be 'new,' but can come from any time, now that the concept has been taken off its linear axis.

In the inter-textual constellation, it is impossible to think of either a "beginning" or an "end" (in Balibar's terms, a "point of retrospective"). The national imaginary accepts new works and develops by absorbing them. The national narrative thus becomes an open system with nodes constantly being developed and discovered. This is precisely the way that *Taḥta shams*'s Yasīn imagines his life upon return to Ramallah, wary as he was of the dangers of nostalgia, and eager for new experiences. What the former fighter exhibits through his character, *al-Thalj* explores through experimentation in form. *Al-Thalj*'s psychological novel and autobiography already illustrated the problem of narrative forms in expressing the complexity of the individual, showing the gaps between narrative and 'truth.' Its final text, however, takes the idea to its limit, and pushes Yasīn's concept of perpetual

beginnings to one that insists on an infinity of texts. The idea of the open text is built subtly into works from both of the series in the Palestine project. This gives a final feature to account for in the model of the constellation.

…after the end

Although he is ultimately killed by an obsessed Salīm, the structure of *Taḥta shams*, combined with Yasīn's own insistence on the importance of beginnings, sets out a first glimpse of the power of an open text. Like the ending of *al-'Ār*, the narrative of *Taḥta shams* does not close with the death of its protagonist. There is one more chapter after Yasīn is killed, and following in the fighter's worldview, it serves to complicate the notion of beginnings, endings, and the persistent revivifying of life. The final chapter, titled "After the end" (176), repeats in its setting and dialogue the first scene in the first chapter of the novel, titled "Before the beginning" (5). In particular, it is his fight for Palestinian freedom that continues, here in the guise of love, and of insisting on love within, above, below, and during occupation. Instead of an ending, the final chapter repeats –with difference—the beginning, to indicate another start that grew out of Yasīn.

The chapters are set some seven years apart, and while everything in the village has changed, it has also stayed the same. Umm Walīd, Yasīn's aunt, is in the house, the birds are chirping, and the men of the neighbourhood are sitting on plastic chairs around a small earthen square. The square, site of Salīm's first performance of the monologue, is also where the men gather, and where the children play football, and which, in the intervening years between the first and last pages of the novel, has become skirted with new homes for the new children of the villagers. The description of the scene is at times repeated word for word from the first chapter. Both open, for example, with the same pastoral description:

> Under the midmorning sun, and in front of the two walnut trees that shaded the lower field, and in the view of sparrows and nightingales… (5)

The second opening takes the words of the first, but adds:

> Under the midmorning sun, which was peeking out through the clouds, and in front of the two walnut trees that shaded the ruined lower field, and in the view of sparrows that opened their wings to cross the field with caution and nightingales… (176)

The words, like the scene, are the same and yet different. There is a continuity in the village, but one that makes room for the passage of time, for the birth of the children described playing soccer in the field, and the death of Yasīn.

As a love story, Yasīn's life can be evaluated as a tragedy, and not as that of a heroic figure who triumphantly returns to his homeland as a way of bolstering a new government's claims to power and authority. As a love story, Yasīn's life becomes one of loss, first of his parents, then of his wife and his adopted son in the Tel al-Zaatar massacre. It is also a story of resistance to this loss, with his insistence on showing his love for Umm Walīd, through a never-empty vase of flowers brought through checkpoints and despite the derision of the community who constantly ask if today is the right time for flowers. For Yasīn, it is always the time. While the structures of power that prevail in Ramallah succeeded in killing Yasīn, through Umm Walīd and the people of the village, his fight continues. The final chapter, then, is a new beginning, as Yasīn had earlier insisted to Salīm, when the playwright first asked him to 'tell his story':

> The story doesn't end when it ends, it starts and when it does the beginning must continue until a new beginning […] I don't see an ending at all, I see only a chain of beginnings. The ending is many beginnings: so where to start? (145)

The mirrored chapters, the acceptance of change, and the conceptualization of both the self and the nation as an assembly of beginnings creates a narrative structure within the novel which is able to accommodate the realities of an open text in theory.

While the life of Yasīn ends and the pages of *Taḥta shams* run out, his story continues through the imagined life of his family members and all those he touched in Ramallah. Even his alternative form of resistance may continue within the village he called home, and might become a part of a national discourse on the meaning and means of resistance. It is not only narrative that becomes an open-text, however. Within the constellation, the form of the novel is also opened, no longer Kristeva's "bounded text," but rather one of an infinite number of possible narratives working to access a larger story. It is a concept pushed by *al-Thalj* and its multiple texts. A poetic preface to the second text of the novel, Bahjat's autobiography, gives the lines of first century Chinese poet Xuedou Chongxian, whose stanza makes one of the inter-texts of the novel. It reads:

The shape of my book [*kitāb*] has seven forms [*ashkāl*]
Three or five forms
So I looked in all of them
For the truth, and found none
Now, night is falling (155)

The stanza creates the frame for the relationship between text one and two of *al-Thalj*, but also sets a paradigm for the idea of the constellation as an open and indeed infinite text. Within the same *kitāb*, the different texts of *al-Thalj* appear as only *ashkāl*—as forms—of the same story. Working around the central character of Bahjat, each of the forms (or genres) is tied as much to the type of text being produced as they are to the story they try to tell. If a reader, like Xuedou, looks to the book even in all of its forms "for the truth," none will be found. While the different angles of narrative tell the story of Bahjat in distinct and often contradicting ways, accessing part of the story as much of part of the realities about the way narrative is structured—just as in the works of the Palestine project—none individually constitutes the truth. While a sense of the 'whole' nation can be conjured through the complex relationships that exist between the many different texts of the nation, as the previous chapters explored, the problem of narrative forms (*ashkāl*) is that none, and no definite number, will produce a truth. Conceptually, then, the nation-constellation must be understood as infinite. This, at least, is what *al-Thalj* suggests as an answer.

The third text of Bahjat's story is a short one, but it creates and encapsulates all of the possible texts that might also tell his story. The final text is titled "All that was not said." It is composed of nothing but eight pages of ellipses. Broken down in to eleven separate paragraphs [See Fig 11 Part III], the running dots conclude with a final line, centred on the page. It reads: "What looks like the end" (285):

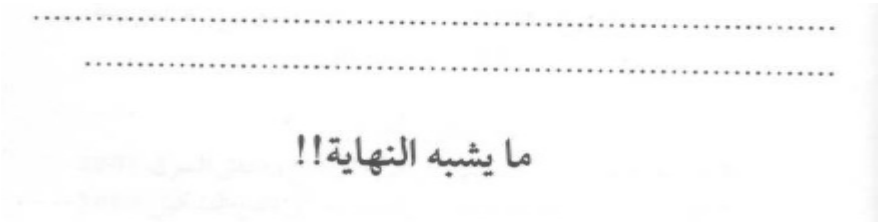

Figure 19: "What looks like the end" of *al-Thalj*

The ellipses stand in for any multitude of things. First, they stand in for the infinite texts that might continue the story of Bahjat, his wife, his family, his city, and his workplace. They intimate that, to truly tell the story of Bahjat, a whole universe of texts would be

required. Until these texts are produced, the ellipses whisper, all texts remain insufficient to narrate either subject or character. Second, the sheer number of ellipses, which force a reader to turn through the pages of the novel, impose a degree of narrative silence. In writing such a prolonged chapter of paragraph after paragraph of dots, the punctuation replicates an *eloquent silence*, where non-speaking is an act of purposeful communication.[55] This becomes at once recognition of the stories that cannot be told, and those that will never be told: "what remains hidden." The three pages of ellipses hold our attention; prolong the end of the novel, forcing a moment of silence, a memorial to mark that which was lost in the telling, as well as insisting on the right to not have to speak. In the field of psychoanalysis, interestingly, silence becomes a refusal of analysis in that it allows no starting point, no point of retrospective.[56] As Freud explained, in his treatment "We began by treating silence as enactment of resistance to treatment."[57] So, a refusal to speak might also be read as a text refusing to be narrated.

The refusal to be contained or confined into a pre-determined form brings the question back once again to the problem of the novel and the nation-state paradox. To break out of the form of the nation requires not only a re-working of the components of the nation, but also those of the novel. Through the infinite texts, the story of a Palestinian nation refuses to fit into the novel as a particular way of telling. At the same time, however, Palestine finds itself beholden to the novel form as the most capable of engaging with the question of the nation. Even the chapter of ellipses takes on the form of the novel, with a chapter title, dots structured into paragraphs, a beginning, middle and end. So, whatever the possibilities of the ellipses, within the frame of *al-Thalj*, they can only be read within frames that are already known, already determined. It is almost as Kristeva explained: a bounded text that can explore binaries, but must ultimately confirm its original opposition. Even when no story is told at all (or when every possible story is told) it too is structured by a particular expectation, a format, a form. Its infinite narrative is reinforced and indeed framed by the paratextual cues that surround it.

Though they repeat the form of the work, the ellipses also draw a different kind of attention to the frame of the final section. The streams of periods are not in the end text, but rather a mimicry of, and in deciding to take the paratextual cues as a framework for reading, the reader must precisely decide how to make sense of them. It is the role of the reader, to think

about form, to understand how form affects reading that makes the difference. The ellipses draw attention to textual convention, and cue a reader to their role. It is not the first time the grammatical device has been used for this purpose. Ahmad Faris Shidyaq, for example (credited with writing one of the first novels in Arabic in 1855),[58] makes use of an entire chapter of ellipses in his *al-Sāq ʿalā al-sāq* "to allow the reader to lose a sense of the artifice of the work, indeed perhaps the artifice of the text in general."[59] The idea, is that the form makes the meaning just as much as the text that holds it. With the endless possibilities of what the ellipses might have said, a reader must also recognize that the form is insufficient for the story. This, perhaps, is the most important element of the constellation: the recognition that text does not, and can never accommodate the entirety of the Palestinian nation. Rather, it is the imagination that must fill in the spaces between texts, between forms, and identify the shape of the nation that is conjured as a result. This national paradigm is one within which new texts, old texts, and changing texts can participate in the telling of an imagined national community that fits the realities and the goals of a Palestinian people.

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[1] See, for example: Carlo Salzani, C*onstellations of Reading: Walter Benjamin in Figures of Actuality*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009, 219-25; Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin, Critical Constellations*, 2002, 6, 234.
[2] Benjamin, *Origin*, 2009.
[3] See, for example, explanations like, "ideas are not represented in themselves, but solely and exclusively in an arrangement of concrete elements in the concept," and the seemingly parallel idea using different terms, "phenomena are not incorporated in ideas. They are combined in them. Ideas are, rather, their objective, virtual arrangement, their objective interpretation," and "it is the function of concepts to group phenomena together," and "ideas are timeless constellations." Benjamin. *Origin*, 33, 34, 34. The terms overlap in a slightly confusing but at the same time discernable explanation of the different parts of the constellation and its functioning.
[4] Benjamin, *Origin*, 36.
[5] Benjamin, *Origin*, 36.
[6] Benjamin, *Origin*, 35.
[7] Barthes, "From work to text," in *Image, Music, Text*, defines the work as "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash," 157.
[8] Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin*, 25.
[9] Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin,* 25.
[10] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 26.
[11] Aghacy, *Masculine Identity*, 4.
[12] Aghacy, *Masculine Identity*, xiii.
[13] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 12.
[14] Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 9.
[15]Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 9.

[16] Tally, *Spatiality*, 36.
[17] Morris, *1948*, 127-128.
[18] Morris, *1948*, 129.
[19] Genette, *Palimpsests*, 206.
[20] Unknown artist. Sketch. "The geocentric model as described by Dante Alighieri," Italy, medieval period. Available from the Wikimedia Commons, (available for use under the creative commons license, image registered more than 70 years ago) at:
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ac/Dante%27s_universe.jpg
[21] Genette, *Paratexts,* 209.
[22] Peteet, *Landscape,* 26.
[23] Tawil-Souri, "Qalandia Checkpoint," 5.
[24] Each of the named categories could be described by Genette's notions of Paratextuality, and Intertextuality.
[25] Genette, *Paratexts,* 21.
[26] Genette, *Paratexts,* 23.
[27] David Damrosch, "What Is World Literature?" in *World Literature Today*. 77.1, 2003, 10.
[28] Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 143.
[29] The passages are quoted without citation beyond reference to the *Divine Comedy* and *Purgatory*, are direct quotes from an Arabic translation of the middle comedy –interestingly not from a UNESCO translation that includes all three works in a single volume. The translations used here are from Charles Elliot Norton's translation into English (1978).
[30] Lino Pertile, "Introduction to Inferno" in *Cambridge Companion* [Rachel Jacoff, Ed] Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 69.
[31] Rachel Jacoff, "Introduction to Paradiso," in *Cambridge Companion,* 143.
[32] See for example the overview in Kenelm Foster, "Dante's Vision of God," in *Italian Studies*. 14.1, 1959: 21-39.
[33] Jacoff, *Cambridge Companion,* 35.
[34] Guy Raffa, *Divine Dialectic*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. See in particular Chapter 9, "The Poet's Incarnate Word."
[35] Rosemary Sayigh, "Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon: Implantation, Transfer or Return?" in *Middle East Policy*. 8.1, 2001, 100.
[36] Genette, *Palimpsests,* 209.
[37] Sahar Khalifah, *Wild Thorns*. London: Saqi Books, 2005, 145.
[38] Genette, *Palimpsests,* 207.
[39] Genette, *Paratexts*, 339.
[40] Said and Mohr, *After the Last Sky*, 33.
[41] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 25.
[42] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 184.
[43] Naṣrallāh, *A'rās āmina; Taḥta shams al-ḍuḥā: Riwāyatān*. Beirut: al-Muʾassasat al-'Arabīya lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 2004. The cover page of the 2004 publication has both titles, with "*ʾArās āmina"* immediately over top of "Taḥta shams al- ḍuḥā." Running up the spine-side of the volume vertically is the series title "al-Malhaī al-filasṭīnīyya." On an internal title sheet is added "riwāyatān" (the word novel in the Arabic dual form: two novels). Following this title sheet is a black and white secondary cover, the same as the front, but without *Taḥta shams al- ḍuḥā*; this is the cover sheet for the first novel. Then, 147 pages later, the same sheet with a different central image bears the second title.
[44] For example: book 1 location is x1 y1 z1 a1 b1 c1and book 2 is x2 y2 z2 a2 b2 c2, and so on. So to describe book 2's location in relation to book 1 we can say x1-x2, y1-y2, z1-z2. And if book 1 and 2 are on the same x and y planes then book 2's location relative to book 1 is z1-z2. Or you can say it as book 2 is z-d (where is z1-z2), where z=z1 since it is the current centre point. (With thanks to Hydar Dewachi for explaining the maths).
[45] Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000, 25.

[46] Millett, *Sexual Politics,* 25.
[47] Angelika Neuwirth, "Hebrew Bible and Arabic poetry: Mahmoud Darwish's Palestine-from paradise lost to a homeland made of words," in *Exile's Poet*, 180.
[48] P. Liotta, "Through the Looking Glass: Creeping Vulnerabilities and the Reordering of Security," in *Security Dialogue*. 36.1 , 2005, 49.
[49] Parsons, *Politics of the Palestinian Authority,* 155.
[50] Genette, *Palimpsests*, 397.
[51] Bertolt Brecht and John Willett, *Brecht on Theatre* (London: Methuen & Co), 1964, 136.
[52] Snir, *Palestinian Theatre,* 141.
[53] Brecht and Willett, *Brecht on Theatre,* 23.
[54] JZY3D, *ForceAtlas 3d layout - 1538 nodes 8032 edges -Java classes hierarchy,* model of stacked 2d graphs "to see how the node and edge properties (size, color) evolve over time *at one glance*" from open source java library. Available at: http://www.jzy3d.org/plugins-graphs.php, accessed July 30, 2015.
[55] Jack Bilmes, "Constituting Silence: Life in the World of Total Meaning," in *Semiotica*. 98 (1994), 1909.
[56] Maggie MacLure *et al*, "Silence as Resistance to Analysis: Or, on not opening one's mouth properly," in *Qualitative Inquiry*." 16, 2010, 494.
[57] Bilmes, "Constituting Silence," 1918.
[58] Aḥmad F Shidyāq, *Leg Over Leg: Volume 1*. New York: New York University Press, 2012, 8.
[59] Kamran Rastegar, *Literary Modernity*. London: Routledge, 2007,108.

New Aesthetic

The inter-textual nation, imagined as a constellation, is the answer to Edward Said's problematics of linear narrative. It is also an alternative for Edward Soja's question of geographies, allowing simultaneity and multiplicity in the imagination where, although "language dictates sequential succession, a linear flow of sentential statements,"[1] the constellation can conjure space otherwise. It was, perhaps, what Maḥmūd Darwīsh himself imagined when he wrote one of the last poems in his final collection of work, "Lā urīdu li-hādhī al-qaṣīda an tantahī" [I do not want this Qasida to end], one verse of which reads thus:

> I do not want this Qasida to end
> I do not want it to have a clear goal
> I do not want it to be a map of exile
> And not of a country
> I do not want this Qasida to end[2]

The constellation has no 'goal' (*hadaf*), in that it has no point of retrospective. It is not a map of exile, because it is a site of belonging; the constellation is not a country in the form of a nation state. Instead, it is a story that does not end, a flexible text that can criticize its own forms, its own histories, symbols, and codes. In so doing, the constellation provides an alternative paradigm within which to think the nation, to recognize the violence of its texts, but to temper that violence through the lasting knowledge that each is subject to scrutiny. It takes time out of the historical register, since, as Darwīsh put it in the same poem: "truly, time is the trap."[3] Liberating the nation from imprisoning retrospective, and from the trap of historical time, the constellation makes space within its 'literary utterance' for all of the texts and the inter-textual relationships that will ensue Darwīsh's call is answered, and the Qasida will never come to an end. The constellation is as Yasīn saw his own life, telling its would-be biographer: "I don't see an ending at all, I see only a chain of beginnings. The ending is many beginnings: so where to start?"

These innovations, in first confronting and then overcoming the paradox of the nation-state, do not only provide an alternative mechanism of national imagery. More than this, the inter-textual nation and its form as a constellation offer a new aesthetic principal for narrative: one that –in its evaluation of a texts or a tradition—overcomes the limits of historical or developmental paradigms. By aesthetic principal, here, I mean centrally a

mode of evaluation, a method of reading that is able to recognize and interpret an array of elements within a given system. So, just like a reader of Shakespeare is meant to identify symmetrical word patterns in a sonnet, and from there assign the words that form the pattern a weighted meaning, then evaluate accordingly,[4] within an inter-textual aesthetic a reader must identify particular elements in order to make aesthetic 'sense' of the work. In the case of *al-Malhāt* and the *Shurafāt*, the nation as a structure had to be read-in to the novels jus as much as generic codes or basic information from traditional intertexts. Within this aesthetic practise, literary meaning reaches its zenith when all of these elements are identified and used to interpret the work. This is the essence of an intert-textual aesthetic. It is a model that proves liberating for more than Palestine, and as a practise of reading it gives shape to complex processes once largely invisible, or from which complete meaning could not be made. I want here to suggest that an aesthetics of reading inter-textually might also work as a model for reading, evaluating, and making sense of a wider range of phenomena.

In the field of modern Arabic literature, for example, current aesthetic practise tends to evaluate works within a developmental paradigm; observing how themes, ideas, or trends 'progress' over time toward an often unidentified goal. Whether this comes from within Area Studies, World or Post-colonial literature—though each field offers its own variation—as Samah Selim observed, "In Arabic literature studies, the question [what is a novel?] is usually framed in genealogical and national terms."[5] This aesthetics of reading, of analysis, relies on external norms, often measuring Arabic by an external ruberic. Since "the question 'What is literature?' is the starting-point of literary aesthetics," and because "The motivation for asking and the interest in possible answers can only be understood against a cultural background where literature figures as an important cultural value," Selim's observation seems hardly surprising. As such, the very question of Arabic literature and how to talk about it –indeed the very framing if the question—has been stuck in the same problematic frameworks that obstructed a clear national imaginary for Palestinian writers in the first place. It is the aesthetics of the European national novel, it is realism, modernism, or post-modernism as defined elsewhere against which the Arabic novel is read.

Coded in the question of 'what is Arabic literature,' remain considerations of place and genre, both defined according to these limiting paradigms. These are largely (if not totally) unable to absorb Arabic fiction as a form of telling wound up in its own, myriad, complex

narrative modes and practices. It also tends to make delimiting (and also largely imposed) assumptions about space. So, if it is true that stories are told "to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience,"[6] than it must also true that the national novel and an aesthetic system that put its emphasis on this sort of interpretation no longer makes sense out of the elements of the Arabic text, if it ever had. Within the prevailing aesthetic, the only questions possible seemed those of periodization (when did the novel originate?), of tracing trajectories of development (again against a European or North American framework), or of comparison between other forms of World Literature broadly conceived (who did what first and why?). Discourse on modern Arabic literature for a long time simply imposed the European model on what was separated out as an Arabic tradition. This resulted in a discourse that "implies that the Arabic novel simply emerged out of a blueprint produced elsewhere and by other people."[7] In the same way as the idea of the nation state (as a framework for national community) was simply ""transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness to a wide variety of social terrains"[8] across the colonies, so too has the concept of literature and literary heritages been developed according to one tradition and imposed on another. Both strategies turn out to the detriment not only of the Arab world, but also to more broad understandings of nation and literature.

A brief look at the field shows the parallels between the process of 'narrativising' that goes into both Arabic literature as a conceived field, and nationalisms as they work to construct the bounded and linear story of an imagined community of people. And, just like Palestinian national narratives, cues already exist within the works to suggest a productive reading of work on Arabic literature inter-textually; that identifying and investing with meaning different and non-contiguous relationships gives a viable and perhaps more productive alternative than prevailing aesthetic norms. In fact, applying an inter-textual aesthetics to the field means being able to understand the impact that European discourse has had not only on the discipline but also on the literature itself, and to link this impact into the constellation without having it limit the possibilities for what Arabic literature achieves.

For at least the past two decades, writing on Arabic Literature (at least in English) has struggled to move past an imposed frame that evaluates 'development' or 'quality' along the pre-determined patterns of European, English, and American literatures. Scholars sought to trace the origins and development of Arabic letters from the pre-Islamic period

and its poetic norms to a modern novel. This closely parallels conversations about the nation, and is best exhibited by early from Ali Jad,[9] Hamdi Sakkut,[10] and perhaps culminated in Roger Allen's *Modern Arabic Literature* (1987)[11] or Muhammad Badawi's 1992 work of the same title. This paradigm found its most developed form in Sabry Hafez' *The genesis of Arabic narrative discourse* (1997).[12] The trajectory in all of these scholarly works was *from* the pre-Islamic Qasida *to* the realist novel, and then a race to the development of the national epic, followed by post-modern experimentation. The invisible (or at times not so invisible) assumption of these early works was that the novel—and in particular the national novel—was the pinnacle of achievement, to be followed by achievements in literary form, much as the European and American novels have been discussed.

This, as Egyptian literary critic Samah Selim points out, meant that a great number of texts "do not fit the ideological mould constructed by critics and historians," and thus get left out of the discourse, "as though no one had ever written them, no one published them, and no one read them."[13] The dynamic is precisely the same as the dominant narratives and trajectories that Palestinian literatures had to grapple with in order to formulate an imaginary for the nation that was able to include what were otherwise "passing blips"[14] in a frame that could not absorb them. The result of what Selim calls the "the formal organization of these texts into literary canons," is the construction of "a cultural discourse through which power is strategically instituted and wielded in the social world."[15] In other words: the construction of literary histories and genealogies serves simply to reinforce existing and established ways of seeing (an existing aesthetic). Selim is, of course, not the only scholar to remark on the problem. Even as the dominant paradigm for discussing Arabic literature reached its peak, a simultaneous trend of critique and redress emerged. This second stream in Arabic literary studies in English sought to extricate criticism from the 'development' paradigm and examine works and trends in Arabic literature in either theoretical or comparative frames. As a consequence, research has looked at national, technical, or theme-bounded topics and through these frames advanced theory in the field of Arabic literature, eschewing the grand narrative of the earlier scholars.

Some of the main attempts in this vein have come from fields outside a direct 'Arabic literature' frame, and looked to texts in Arabic to further post-colonial,[16] feminist, gender studies,[17] identity politics,[18] modernity or post-modernity,[19] studies. Or to advance thinking

on technique and form, in particular work on modernism[20] and intertextuality.[21] However, while this work undoubtedly resulted in more nuanced treatments of the literature, findings have less often been fed back into work on Arabic literature, and instead stayed trapped in these sub or alternative discourses. Even more problematic, while these studies escape one determinist frame, they too often fall prey to another, usually imposed through similar problems in these adjacent disciplines. Fexample, Stefan G Meyer's *The Experimental Arabic Novel,* positioned as a post-colonial study, falls precisely into the trap of periodization and comparison. As its back blurb summary boasts, "This approach to postcolonial literature offers a way to compare and contrast it meaningfully with Western literature without relying on inherently Western literary models," but the work essentially traces "modernism" in a linear fashion through historical time.[22] So, while it gives to the field an alternative articulation of "modernism," the frame of 'development' and the ultimate idea of a retrospective history, is maintained. Anna Bernard's *Rhetorics of Belonging* uses Palestinian and Israeli fiction to challenge the field of post-colonialism and open up a discourse on the failures of 'post-colonialism' to understand current colonial trends in Palestine.[23] However, the findings remain within and responseive to this adjacent field.

Ouyang's double set on the poetics and politics of the Arabic novel perhaps comes closest to developing an alternative poetics.[24] However, the project is framed within the "dialectics of past and present, modernity and tradition, and the literary configuration of the nation-state in the Arabic novel."[25] It ultimately serves as a re-examination of the tradition and its modern trajectories rather than building an alternative aesthetics from within which to understand the Arabic literary tradition. This is by no means to say that these approaches are not invaluable. Work from these alternative perspectives has given insight into Arabic literature from multiple alternative vantages and inscribed in the wider discourse the complexity of the field. It has exposed new insights and angles, and from them new or alternative paradigms for understanding However, these alternative approaches remain beholden to questions of tradition and modernity that largely emerge from the problematic periodization imposed by the prevailing aesthetic norm.

Discourse on gender, on post-coloniality, or on modernity each came out of a particular and hegemonic (European/North American) frame of thought. At best, then, though they may be groundbreaking on qiestions of gender or place, they are still responding to problematic

frames. Most of these alternative frameworks were undergirded by the same sets of assumptions about place, space, and belonging, as the idea of the nation-state. Like the three texts of *al-Thalj* and Bahjat's stories that are each trapped in the answer to the first: gender based on concepts that emerged in the 'west'; the post-colonial periodizing the pre/post and largely reads modern events as a reaction to an imperial period; and modernity presuming a radical break with the past that continues to inform and influence daily practise. These approaches on their own are thus largely unable to connect their analyses of Arabic literature to an aesthetic that understands and evaluates the full scope of what is being presented. Indeed, if stories are told "to find a shape, a form, in the turmoil of human experience,"[26] the practices of reading these stories must reflect the values and realities of those experiences. If the aesthetic used to read a work remains entrenched in practices that cannot make meaning from these shapes, then we are no better off for having told them.

What can be said, however, is that second wave work on Arabic literature from across these many disciplines has engaged in analysis that made it possible for the inter-textual to become visible. For example, work on Arabic fiction from a postcolonial perspective has found that, "The postcolonial consciousness of time is not, therefore, a linear one, despite its contextualization in time and space,"[27] and that in Arabic literature "Time as such is focused in more than one spot of action and evolves thereby in horizontal, vertical, and metaphysical dimensions that belie mere linearity."[28] These insights strike at the heart of what a great deal of contemporary Arabic literature articulates, and are thus invaluable in thinking about the field through a framework that is neither genealogical, geographically static, or periodized. Work on intertextuality, perhaps even more than post-coloniality, has brought research closer to understanding the aesthetics that drive creative Arabic writings. Analysis of intertextuality observes that the technique is able to "multiply points of view in order to approach a more complex truth." [29] As al-Musawi rightly observes, these techniques and their analysis "invite further analysis."

Reading intertextuality as a call for reading inter-textually as an aesthetic practise, the model of Palestine's nation constellation provides an alternative figuration of the field; one that can absorb the innovations made in the adjacent subjects, and use the critical lens furnished by post-colonial or gender studies to make sense of the structures of power operating to shape both literary products and discourse. Read thus, Arabic literature can

claim a heritage that includes the Qasida, the realist novel, the *1001 Nights*, Shakespeare, Victorian England, the tales of the Bani Hilal, and the shores of the Persian Gulf in a way that eschews the linear. Its novels be, make use of, or adapt modernism, realism, or surrealism, giving new meanings to the terms or using their techniques to re-imagine the maqama, the qasida, or the folktale. Within this constellated heritage, no form is regarded as 'more developed' or sophisticated than another. Rather, each responds to and is understood within its context, and references to the many elements of a text's past also brings into the literary imaginary the structures that saw these texts created. Thus, an intertextual reference from any place, penned at any time (where that place and that time and their structures of power formed but are dissociated from the text) can be called forth along with its context, into a new work of literature. Following the clues of intertextuality, these diverse elements can be understood inter-textually; as an imaginative drive that seeks to make links beyond the bounded and linear, and opens up thinking on Arabic literature as a complex and relational field that can nonetheless be understood as whole.

Disarticulated from a linear literary history, Shakespeare's Desdemona, Othello, and Julius Caesar can turn up just as easily in an Israeli jail cell shortly after the Naksa as in the memories of a returned student in a newly independent Sudan. Victorian England must thus be read into the Arab literary heritage, at the same time as the messages of betrayal that the plays express. Of course, the relationship with England and the legacy of betrayal –two texts in the Arabic literary constellation –are read into different contexts when it comes to Habibi's *Pessoptimist,*[30] or Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration of the North*.[31] Within the constellation, however, there is room for the uneven operation of some texts on others, and for a complex reading of Victorian or colonial England and its varying legacies on many of texts that make up Arabic Literature. In fact, recognizing and 'reading in' the uneven legacy is precisely the advantage of the constellation and its flexibility in acknowledging and sustaining different sorts of relationships. What this achieves is a recognition of the colonial/post-colonial as a structure within the constellation that can be understood through the reading of the intertexts, but means that the works are not reduced to this context. Shakespeare in fact provides a useful entry point into a re-thinking of literary heritage and the scope of a literary field. Work on 'global Shakespeare' has for some time worked to recognize the impressive reach of the bard; the revitalization and new meanings that the

canonical English plays take on when read in within and as a part of other literary traditions.[32]

The same can be said about discourses on tradition/modernity, or folk/formal literary traditions. The *Pessoptimist* and Naguib Mahfouz' *Arabian Nights and Days* are only two examples of countless other Arabic works can claim the *1001 Nights*,[33] from its use of the frame story, its themes, characters, tropes, and journeys, each intertextual reference has a different effect and different purpose.[34] To what extent this literary past is claimed within any given work or collection of works is further evidence of the complex relationship within Arabic literature to its own pasts. Moreover, to claim the work—which has its own fascinating inter-textual possibilities—is to claim a past that is not in itself unproblematic. This text also comes with structures and limitations that are colonial, economic, and link the development of storytelling with a whole network of other cultural pasts. Indeed, the *Nights,* like Shakespeare, might best be seen as a star shared in many literary constellations, informing writers from Voltaire to Cervantes.[35] Robert Irwin has even called the nights as influential to English literature as the Bible.[36] In order to interpret its usage in any given Arabic literary work, each of these elements must be identified; without this inter-textual aesthetics the full literary scope of the references cannot be discerned.

The same is true, for example, for the imagined past of ancient Egypt. Elliot Colla has catalogued nearly a dozen authors writing in Arabic whose works engage with this time and space as a 'text' of the past as well as one that is present in contemporary Egyptian society.[37] Colla's work takes into account colonial context of the study of ancient Egypt, as well as themes, interpretations, and appropriations of this and an indigenous set of references. In short, it lays out all of the 'texts' in conversation when ancient Egypt is brought into literature intertextually. *Conflicted Antiquities* gives us all of the tools to read inter-textually; the social structures at play when ancient Egypt is imagined in different periods, the different hallmarks of usage, their interpretation, and the effect of these within different literary works. Of course, we read these inter-texts differently in Gamal Ghitani's *Pyramid Texts*,[38] than we do in Mahfouz' *Akhenaten,*[39] where the latter works through modern political issues on the stage of the ancient civilization, and the former uses the pyramids as a touchstone for thinking that same ancient past and questioning how much we can know about it.

The current state of the field meant Selim's investigation of Egyptian village texts had to focus on how the works thwarted "linear, pragmatic and disciplinary" modes of narration in favour of "circular, affinitive, and subaltern" ones.[40] Her analysis in turn showed how village narratives grappled with some of the epistemological structures of the nationalist discourse, and made use of intertextuality to challenge it. Her findings, that the village text "competes with and challenges the dominant point-of-view of the urban imagination"[41] in an inter-textual field could instead focus on how the texts draw on and extend knowledge of the workings of the literary constellation. For example, looking at how structures of power act differentially on village writings, or at what texts are mobilized or challenged within the works. Instead of responding to the developmental frame, or working to expand a problematic discussion so that it includes sets of non-dominant works, approaching the field from an inter-textual aesthetic presumes the open-endedness of the field. It also includes the disciplines that touch on Arabic literature and the unique insights that they bring can also be brought within the constellation, helping to unpack and critique the history of readings and analysis and their influence on thinking.

Seen as a constellation that draws within it many textual pasts and systemic limitations, perhaps the field can finally break away from the claim that the novel–even in Arabic—remains "the characteristic…expression of western modernity,"[42] and can read innovations in Arabic literature within a wider context. In asking, now, 'what is Arabic literature' we can instead tune into the way that fictional works weave and imagine the relationships between the many texts of this constellation. We can ask what that constellation looks like, and analyse the relationships between its parts. Reading becomes interpreting the structures that shape thought just as it does identifying word meters, dialect discernment, or symbol. What this inter-textual approach to an aesthetics of Arabic literature allows, is Barthes recognition on a scale beyond any individual work: "The text is that space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate."[43] Evaluation of trends or influences can be taken off the historical timeline of 'development.' Novels also no longer have to be national, genres can be flexible, linguistic traditions played with openly, questioned and considered. Indeed as they already are.

Reading Naṣrallāh's literature within an inter-textual aesthetic bypasses the question of the nation as a limiting factor and lets go of the imperial contestation over who has the

legitimate right to live in, govern, or determine the future of a particular place or people.[44] The inter-textual aesthetic gives priority to tracing a better picture of social reality from the complex interweaving of texts in any given literary work. An inter-textual aesthetics of Arabic literature is able to recognize that, as Elias Khoury has suggested:

> Writing in times of transition takes the form of a journey towards what we do not know, and towards the shock of writing what we know, which will lead us to discover how writing changes things and does not only reflect them.[45]

That the rules of the worlds fictional writing reflects change just as the rules of writing do; and aesthetics must develop to respond to these realities. To read with an inter-textual aesthetic is to read in a way that takes account of prevailing forms, but subsumes them within a more expansive and inclusive logic. This is an aesthetics in the very sense of the word, since it creates a form of narrative analysis that *can* express and make room for that which remained unseen by the prevailing paradigm of the national novel and the assumptions about meaning that came with it.

This model moves discussion beyond the realm of the national allegory,[46] and transcends the post-colonial quest for national and cultural legitimacy through the imagination of the nation specifically through European forms. Instead, reading the field inter-textually allows for a new discursive frame; one that recognizes the fluidity of not only form, but also the social structures that undergird the way that narratives take on social meaning. To read Arabic literature inter-textually, is precisely to allow works to "define the historico-philosophical moment at which [they] became possible," and recognize the process whereby these works can "grow into a symbol of the essential thing that needs to be said."[47]

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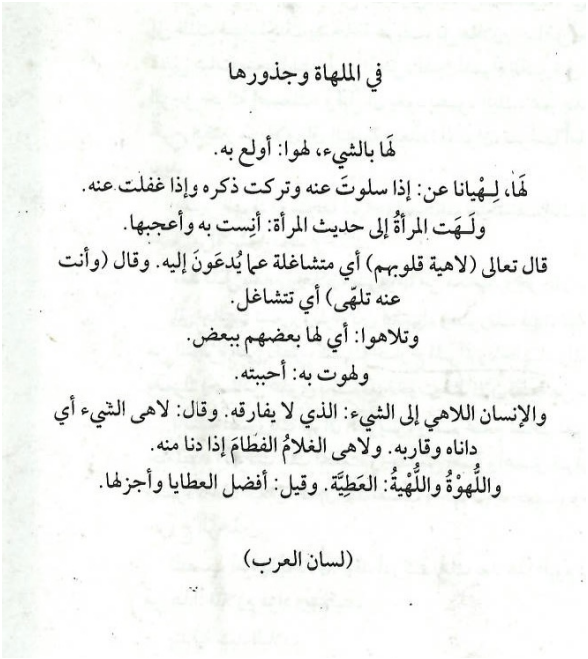
[1] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso, 1989, 2.
[2] Maḥmūd Darwīsh, *La ̄urīdu li-hādhī al-qaṣīda an tantahī: Al-dīwān al-akhīr*. Beirut: Riyāḍ al-Rayyis lil-Kutub wa-al-Nashr, 2009, 74.
[3] Darwīsh, *La ̄urīdu li-hādhī al-qaṣīda*, 77.
[4] Stein Olsen, *The End of Literary Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987,4.
[5] Samah Selim, "The Narrative Craft: Realism and Fiction in the Arabic Canon," in *Edebiyat*. 14, 2003, 109.
[6] Paul Starkey, "Crisis and Memory in Rashid al-Daif's Dear Mr Kawabata: An Essay in Narrative Disorder," in Seigneurie, Ken [Ed] *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003, 129.
[7] Selim, "The Narrative Craft," 109.
[8] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 26.
[9] Ali B Jad, *Form and Technique in the Egyptian Novel, 1912-1971*. London: Ithaca Press, 1983.

[10] Hamdi Sakkut, *The Egyptian Novel and Its Main Trends from 1913 to 1952* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press), 1971.
[11] Roger Allen, *Modern Arabic Literature*. New York: Ungar Pub. Co, 1987.
[12] Sabri Hafiz, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse*. London: Saqi Books, 1993.
[13] Selim, "The Narrative Craft," 109.
[14] Selim, "The Narrative Craft," 109.
[15] Selim, "The Narrative Craft," 109.
[16] Stefan G Meyer, *The Experimental Arabic Novel*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001; Anna Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine*. Liverpool : Liverpool University Press, 2013.
[17] Lisa S Majaj *et al*., *Intersections*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002; Aghacy, *Masculine Identity*; Hoda ElSadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel*. Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2012; Anna Ball, *Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial Feminist Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
[18] Mahmoud Ghanayim, *The Quest for a Lost Identity: Palestinian Fiction in Israel*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008; Ibrahim Taha, *The Palestinian Novel: A Communication Study*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2000; Sabri Hafiz, *The Quest for Identities*. London: Saqi, 2007.
[19] Angelika Neuwirth *et al*, *Arabic Literature: Postmodern Perspectives*. London: Saqi, 2010.
[20] Stefan G Meyer, *The Experimental Arabic Novel*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
[21] Deheuvels *et al*, *Intertextuality*.
[22] Meyer, *The Experimental Arabic Novel*, 2001.
[23] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, 2013.
[24] Ouyang, *Politics of Nostalgia*, 2013. And: Wen-chin Ouyang, *Poetics of Love in the Arabic Novel: Nation-state, Modernity and Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
[25] Zeina G Halabi, "Book Review: Politics of Nostalgia in the Arabic Novel: Nation-State, Modernity and Tradition, Written by Wen-Chin Ouyang," in *Journal of Arabic Literature*. 45, 2014, 265.
[26] Paul Starkey, "Crisis and Memory in Rashid al-Daif's Dear Mr Kawabata: An Essay in Narrative Disorder," in Seigneurie, Ken [Ed] *Crisis and Memory: The Representation of Space in Modern Levantine Narrative*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2003, 129.
[27] Al-Musawi, *Postcolonial Arabic Novel*, 307.
[28] Al-Musawi, *Postcolonial Arabic Novel*, 307.
[29] Gonzales-Quijano Yves, "The territory of autobiography" in *Writing the Self*, 188.
[30] Jarrar, "A Narration of 'deterritorialization'," 15.
[31] S. Rajeev, "Moving in and Out of Borders." *The Journal of English Language and Literature*. 59.3, 2013, 412.
[32] The global re-appropriations of Shakespeare have in many ways revived study of the plays. See, for example the vast array of essays in: Peter Holland [ed], *Shakespeare As Cultural Catalyst*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
[33] Anna Z Sessona, "The Rewriting of the Arabian Nights by Imīl Habībī." *Middle Eastern Literatures*. 5.1, 2010: 32.
[34] See in particular Andre Miquel's essay in: Richard G Hovannisian and Georges Sabagh [eds]. *The Thousand and One Nights in Arabic Literature and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
[35] See in particular the introduction to Philip F Kennedy and Marina Warner, *Scheherazade's Children: Global Encounters with the Arabian Nights*. New York: NYU Press, 2013.
[36] See the final chapter, "Children of the Nights," in Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2004.
[37] Elliott Colla, *Conflicted Antiquitiesd*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
[38] Gamal Ghitani. *Pyramid Texts*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2007.
[39] Naguib Mahfouz, *Akhenaten*. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.

[40] Selim, *Novel and the Rural Imaginary,* 230.
[41] Selim, *Novel and the Rural Imaginary,* 230.
[42] Hunter, *Before Novels*. New York: Norton, 1990, quoted in Aghacy, *Masculine Identity,* xv.
[43] Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 164.
[44] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, New York: Vintage Books, 1994, xii.
[45] Elias Khoury, "Unfolding of modern fiction and Arab Memory," in *Journal of the Midwest Modern Languages Association*, 23(1), 4.
[46] Jameson, "Third World Literature," 69.
[47] György Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*. Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1971, 88.

Appendix

The passage below gives the full *Lisān al-ʿarab* entry for l-h-w. The highlighted sections indicate which lines were pulled from the full entry and used in the passage, which is given at the end of each new edition of *al-Malhāt al-filasṭīnīyya*. The lines were not excerpted in any particular order, so the first line of the passage is not the first line to appear in the entry. Numbers adjacent to the highlighted sections in the full excerpt below correspond to the line number in the excerpt from *al-Malhāt*. This gives an indication as to the apparent randomness of the selections. A full translation of the excerpted lines (and thus the passage) follows, and shows how tradition can be 're-written' using its disarticulated parts.



في الملهاة وجذورها

لَهَا بالشيء، لهوا: أولع به.

لَهَا، لِـهْيانا عن: إذا سلوتَ عنه وتركت ذكره وإذا غفلت عنه.

ولَـهَت المرأةُ إلى حديث المرأة: أنِست به وأعجبها.

قال تعالى (لاهية قلوبهم) أي متشاغلة عما يُدعَونَ إليه. وقال (وأنت عنه تلهّى) أي تتشاغل.

وتلاهوا: أي لها بعضهم ببعض.

ولهوت به: أحببته.

والإنسان اللاهي إلى الشيء: الذي لا يفارقه. وقال: لاهى الشيء أي داناه وقاربه. ولاهى الغلامُ الفطامَ إذا دنا منه.

واللُّهْوةُ واللُّهْيةُ: العَطِيَّة. وقيل: أفضل العطايا وأجزلها.

(لسان العرب)

Figure 20: "Of 'comedy' and its roots" (l-h-w)

اللهو ما لهوت به ولعبت به
وشغلك من هوى وطرب
ونحوهما وفي الحديث ليس شيء
من اللهو إلا في ثلاث أي ليس
منه مباح إلا هذه لأن كل واحدة
منها إذا تأملتها وجدتها معينة
على حق أو ذريعة إليه واللهو
اللعب يقال لهوت بالشيء ألهو به
لهوا وتلهيت به إذا لعبت به
وتشاغلت وغفلت به عن غيره
ولهيت عن الشيء بالكسر ألهى
بالفتح لهيا ولهيانا إذا سلوت عنه
وتركت ذكره وإذا غفلت عنه

واشتغلت وقوله تعالى وإذا رأوا
تجارة أو لهوا قيل اللهو الطبل
وقيل اللهو كل ما تلهي به لها
يلهو لهوا والتهى وألهاه ذلك قال
ساعدة بن جؤية فألهاهم باثنين
منهم كلاهما به قارت من النجيع
دميم والملاهي آلات اللهو وقد
تلاهى بذلك والألهوة والألهية
والتلهية ما تلاهى به ويقال بينهم
ألهية كما يقال أحجية وتقديرها
أفعولة والتلهية حديث يتلهى به
قال الشاعر بتلهية أريش بها
سهامي تبذ المرشيات من القطين

ولهت المرأة إلى حديث المرأة
تلهو لهوا ولهوا أنست به
وأعجبها قال البيت لامرئ القيس
وصدره ألا زعمت بسباسة اليوم
أنني كبرت وأن لا يحسن اللهو
أمثالي وقد يكنى باللهو عن
الجماع وفي سجع للعرب إذا طلع
الدلو أنسل العفو وطلب اللهو
الخلو أي طلب الخلو التزويج
واللهو النكاح ويقال المرأة ابن
عرفة في قوله تعالى لاهية قلوبهم
أي متشاغلة عما يدعون إليه
وهذا من لها عن الشيء إذا

تشاغل بغيره يلهى ومنه قوله تعالى فأنت عنه تلهى أي تتشاغل والنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لا يلهو لأنه صلى الله عليه وسلم قال ما أنا من دد ولا الدد مني والتهى بامرأة فهي لهوته واللهو واللهوة المرأة الملهو بها وفي التنزيل العزيز لو أردنا أن نتخذ لهوا لاتخذناه من لدنا أي امرأة ويقال ولدا تعالى الله عز وجل وقال العجاج ولهوة اللاهي ولو تنطسا أي ولو تعمق في طلب الحسن وبالغ في ذلك وقال أهل التفسير اللهو في لغة أهل حضرموت الولد وقيل اللهو المرأة قال وتأويله في اللغة أن الولد لهو الدنيا أي لو أردنا أن نتخذ ولدا ذا لهو نلهى به ومعنى لاتخذناه من لدنا أي لاصطفيناه مما نخلق ولهي به أحبه وهو من ذلك الأول لأن حبك الشيء ضرب من اللهو به وقوله تعالى ومن الناس من يشتري لهو الحديث ليضل عن سبيل الله جاء في التفسير أن لهو الحديث هنا الغناء لأنه يلهى به عن ذكر الله عز وجل وكل لعب لهو وقال قتادة في هذه الآية أما والله لعله أن لا يكون أنفق مالا وبحسب المرء من الضلالة أن يختار حديث الباطل على حديث الحق وقد روي عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم أنه حرم بيع المغنية وشراءها وقيل إن لهو الحديث هنا الشرك والله أعلم ولهي عنه ومنه ولها لهيا ولهيانا وتلهى عن الشيء كله غفل عنه ونسيه وترك ذكره وأضرب عنه وألهاه أي شغله ولهي عنه وبه كرهه وهو من ذلك لأن نسيانك له وغفلتك عنه ضرب من الكره ولهاه به تلهية أي علله وتلاهوا أي لها بضعهم ببعض الأزهري وروي عن عمر رضي الله عنه أنه أخذ أربعمائة دينار فجعلها في صرة ثم قال للغلام اذهب بها إلى أبي عبيدة ابن الجراح ثم تله ساعة في البيت ثم انظر ماذا يصنع قال ففرقها تله ساعة أي تشاغل وتعلل والتلهي بالشيء التعلل به والتمكث يقال تلهيت بكذا أي تعللت به وأقمت عليه ولم أفارقه وفي قصيد كعب وقال كل صديق كنت آمله ولا ألهينك إني عنك مشغول أي لا أشغلك عن أمرك فإني مشغول عنك وقيل معناه لا أنفعك ولا أعللك فاعمل لنفسك وتقول اله عن الشيء أي اتركه وفي الحديث في البلل بعد الوضوء اله عنه وفي خبر ابن الزبير أنه كان إذا سمع صوت الرعد لهي عن حديثه أي تركه وأعرض عنه وكل شيء تركته فقد لهيت عنه وأنشد الكسائي إله عنها فقد أصابك منها واله عنه ومنه بمعنى واحد الأصمعي لهيت من فلان وعنه فأنا ألهى الكسائي لهيت عنه لا غير قال وكلام العرب لهوت عنه ولهوت منه وهو أن تدعه وترفضه وفلان لهو عن الخير على فعول الأزهري اللهو الصدوف يقال لهوت عن الشيء ألهو لها قال وقول العامة تلهيت وتقول ألهاني فلان عن كذا أي شغلني وأنساني قال الأزهري وكلام العرب جاء بخلاف ما قال الليث يقولون لهوت بالمرأة وبالشيء ألهو لهوا لا غير قال ولا يجوز لها ويقولون لهيت عن الشيء ألهى لهيا ابن بزرج لهوت قوله ابن بزرج لهوت إلخ هذه عبارة الأزهري وليس فيها ألهو لهوا ولهيت بالشيء ألهو لهوا إذا لعبت به وأنشد خلعت عذارها ولهيت عنها كما خلع العذار عن الجواد وفي الحديث إذا استأثر الله بشيء فاله عنه أي اتركه وأعرض عنه ولا تتعرض له وفي حديث سهل بن سعد فلهي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم بشيء كان بين يديه أي اشتغل ثعلب عن ابن الأعرابي لهيت به وعنه كرهته ولهوت به أحببته وأنشد صرمت حبالك فاله عنها زينب ولقد أطلت عتابها لو تعتب لو تعتب لو ترضيك وقال العجاج دار لهيا قلبك المتيم يعني لهو قلبه وتلهيت به مثله ولهيا تصغير لهوى فعلى من اللهو أزمان ليلى عام ليلى وحمي أي همي وسدمي وشهوتي وقال صدقت لهيا قلبي المستهتر قال العجاج دار للهو للملهي مكسال جعل الجارية لهوا للملهي لرجل يعلل بها أى لمن يلهي بها الأزهري بإسناده عن أنس بن مالك عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال سألت ربي أن لا يعذب اللاهين من ذرية البشر فأعطانيهم قيل في تفسير اللاهين إنهم الأطفال الذين لم يقترفوا ذنبا وقيل هم البله الغافلون وقيل اللاهون الذين لم يتعمدوا الذنب إنما أتوه غفلة ونسيانا وخطأ وهم الذين يدعون الله فيقولون ربنا لا تؤاخذنا إن نسينا أو أخطأنا كما علمهم الله عز وجل وتلهت الإبل بالمرعى إذا تعللت به وأنشد لنا هضبات قد ثنين أكارعا تلهى ببعض النجم والليل أبلق يريد ترعى في القمر والنجم نبت وأراد بهضبات ههنا إبلا وأنشد شمر لبعض بني كلاب وساجية حوراء يلهو إزارها إلى كفل راب وخصرمخصر قال يلهو إزارها إلى الكفل فلا يفارقه قال والإنسان اللاهي إلى الشيء إذا لم يفارقه ويقال قد لاهى الشيء إذا داناه وقاربه ولاهى الغلام الفطام إذا دنا منه وأنشد قول ابن حلزة أتلهى بها الهواجز إذ كل ل ابن هم بلية عمياء قال تلهيه بها ركوبه إياها وتعلله بسيرها وقال الفرزدق ألا إنما أفنى شبابي وانقضى على مر ليل دائب ونهار يعيدان لي ما أمضيا وهما معا طريدان لا يستلهيان قراري قال معناه لا ينتظران قراري ولا يستوقفاني والأصل في الاستلهاء بمعنى التوقف أن الطاحن إذا أراد أن يلقي في فم الرحى لهوة وقف عن الإدارة وقفة ثم استعير ذلك ووضع موضع الاستيقاف والانتظار واللهوة واللهوة ما ألقيت في فم الرحى من الحبوب للطحن قال ابن كلثوم ولهوتها قضاعة أجمعينا وألهى الرحى وللرحى وفي الرحى ألقى فيها

اللهوة وهو ما يلقيه الطاحن في فم الرحى بيده والجمع لها واللهوة واللهية الأخيرة على المعاقبة العطية وقيل أفضل العطايا وأجزلها ويقال إنه لمعطاء للها إذا كان جوادا يعطي الشيء الكثير وقال الشاعر إذا ما باللها ضن الكرام وقال النابغة عظام اللها أبناء أبناء عدرة لهاميم يستلهونها بالجراجر يقال أراد بقوله عظام اللها أي عظام العطايا يقال ألهيت له لهوة من المال كما يلهى في خرتي الطاحونة ثم قال يستلهونها الهاء للمكارم وهي العطايا التي وصفها والجراجر الحلاقيم ويقال أراد باللها الأموال أراد أن أموالهم كثيرة وقد استلهوها أي استكثروا منها وفي حديث عمر منهم الفاتح فاه للهوة من الدنيا اللهوة بالضم العطية وقيل هي أفضل العطاء وأجزله واللهوة العطية دراهم كانت أو غيرها واشتراه بلهوة من مال أي حفنة واللهوة الألف من الدنانير والدراهم ولا يقال لغيرها عن أبي زيد وهم لهاء مائة أي قدرها كقولك زهاء مائة وأنشد ابن بري للعجاج كأنما لهاؤه لمن جهر ليل ورز وغره إذا وغر واللهاة لحمة حمراء في الحنك معلقة على عكدة اللسان والجمع لهيات غيره اللهاة الهنة المطبقة في أقصى سقف الفم ابن سيده واللهاة من كل ذي حلق اللحمة المشرفة على الحلق وقيل هي ما بين منقطع أصل اللسان إلى منقطع القلب من أعلى الفم والجمع لهوات ولهيات ولهي ولهي ولها ولهاء قال ابن بري شاهد اللها قول الراجز تلقيه في طرق أتتها من عل قذف لها جوف وشدق أهدل قال وشاهد اللهوات قول الفرزدق ذباب طار في لهوات ليث كذاك الليث يلتهم الذبابا وفي حديث الشاة المسمومة فما زلت أعرفها في لهوات رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم واللهاة أقصى الفم وهي من البعير العربي الشقشقة ولكل ذي حلق لهاة وأما قول الشاعر يا لك من تمر ومن شيشاء ينشب في المسعل واللهاء فقد روي بكسر اللام وفتحها فمن فتحها ثم مد فعلى اعتقاد الضرورة وقد رآه بعض النحويين والمجتمع عليه عكسه وزعم أبو عبيد أنه جمع لها على لهاء قال ابن سيده وهذا قول لا يعرج عليه ولكنه جمع لهاة كما بينا لأن فعلة يكسر على فعال ونظيره ما حكاه سيبويه من قولهم أضاة وإضاء ومثله من السالم رحبة ورحاب ورقبة ورقاب قال ابن سيده وشرحنا هذه المسألة ههنا لذهابها على كثير من النظار قال ابن بري إنما مد قوله في المسعل واللهاء للضرورة قال هذه الضرورة على من رواه بفتح اللام لأنه مد المقصور وذلك مما ينكره البصريون قال وكذلك ما قبل هذا البيت قد علمت أم أبي السعلاء أن نعم مأكولا على الخواء فمد السعلاء والخواء ضرورة وحكى سيبويه لهي أبوك مقلوب عن لاه أبوك وإن كان وزن لهي فعل ولاه فعل فله نظير قالوا له جاه عند السلطان مقلوب عن وجه ابن الأعرابي لاهاه إذا دنا منه وهالاه إذا فازعه النضر يقال لاه أخاك يا فلان أي افعل به نحو ما فعل بك من المعروف والهه سواء وتلهلأت أي نكصت واللهواء ممدود موضع ولهوة اسم امرأة قال أصد وما بي من صدود ولا غنى ولا لاق قلبي بعد لهوة لائق

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